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Publications

(42)



No. 77

Nº 77

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 39th Parliament

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

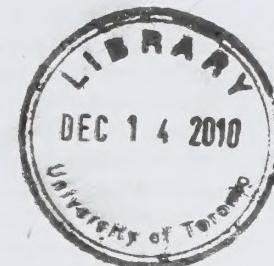
Wednesday 1 December 2010

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mercredi 1^{er} décembre 2010



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 1 December 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 1^{er} décembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Islamic prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SAINTE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Mr. Bentley, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts / Projet de loi 110, Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm delighted to rise today to introduce third reading of Bill 110, and I will be sharing my time with my esteemed colleague from Willowdale.

Mr. David Zimmer: It's my pleasure to speak today on third reading of the Good Government Act, 2010. Let me just go over some of the points that we've been discussing in the debate in first and second reading.

The Good Government Act would strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of government operations. It does respond to the changing needs of Ontario in the 21st century. It ensures that the province's legislation is in keeping with modern times. This bill is a housekeeping measure, but a very important and necessary one.

As everyone here knows, the bill builds on our Open for Business initiative. Our government has demonstrated its commitment to working with businesses to address barriers to investment and growth. If passed, this bill will further our Open for Business goals. Those goals are to decrease the regulatory burden and to better respond to businesses. If passed, this act would benefit both business and the public by improving and streamlining government services. This bill includes approximately 70 amendments to legislation from seven different ministries, including several changes to the Ministry of the Attorney General statutes.

Let me first say a few words about the Justices of the Peace Act. Justices of the peace are an integral and

important part of our justice system here in Ontario. In 2006, our government amended the Justices of the Peace Act to ensure continued public confidence by creating a more open and transparent appointment process, and establishing minimum qualification standards for justices of the peace. The reforms also established a new Justices of the Peace Appointments Advisory Committee to make the appointment process more open and more transparent.

However, the challenge is that while people from all over the province are always invited to apply, in some areas there may not actually be an opening for a justice of the peace, or there may be a lot of openings in another area. Through our latest government bill, we are proposing changes that would further enhance the recruitment process for justices of the peace. The Justices of the Peace Appointments Advisory Committee's recruitment process would change from an annual, province-wide process to a more targeted process. Advertising could be done within the region where and when a vacancy occurs in fact.

If this bill is passed, the new recruitment model would be similar to the one that is used by the Judicial Appointments Advisory Committee to recommend provincial judicial candidates to the Attorney General. What this does is it gives the committee more flexibility to tailor its search for candidates to the specific region and the specific needs of the vacant position, such as bilingual or aboriginal candidates. This amendment is very important. It would help to create a more effective, focused and efficient recruiting process based on vacancies when appointing justices of the peace.

Let me say a few words about some of the amendments relating to the Provincial Offences Act. The Good Government Act includes a proposed change to the Provincial Offences Act. Courthouses are very busy places. There are times when parties involved in a matter submit a notice of appeal and, for whatever reason, fail to move forward with that appeal. These are called abandoned appeals. The proposed amendment would expand the ability of the court clerk to seek dismissal of appeals that appear to be abandoned. This proposal reflects and facilitates the recommendations of a municipal and provincial working group that was looking for ways to simplify court procedures and improve service to the public. This is yet another way we are making government more efficient and more effective.

Let me say a few words about the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario and the Licence Appeal Tribunal. This legislation includes proposed changes to

several statutes that would transfer the adjudicative function, under several statutes, from the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario to the Licence Appeal Tribunal. The Licence Appeal Tribunal provides an expert appeals process for compensation claims and licensing activities under 22 different statutes regulated by the government of Ontario. The Licence Appeal Tribunal would take over the adjudicative matters from the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario as directed under the Alcohol and Gaming Regulation and Public Protection Act, the Gaming Control Act, the Liquor Licence Act and the Vintners Quality Alliance Act. These amendments would allow the Alcohol and Gaming Commission to better focus on its governance and policy-making roles, including the regulation of the sale, service and consumption of alcohol in public places—and casinos, commercial lotteries and charitable gaming, including electronic gaming.

Let me say a few words about some of the amendments relating to the Business Corporations Act. The proposed amendments to the Business Corporations Act would, if passed, improve services to businesses. This would provide more flexibility and increase the government's ability to respond to the needs of the business community when it comes to making changes to regulations and forms. A proposed change would clarify that a person who enters into an oral or written contract on behalf of a corporation prior to the corporation coming into existence may assign, amend or terminate that contract up to the time when the contract is formally adopted by the corporation.

Further proposed changes would also address situations where a shareholder holds shares without a shareholder certificate. The changes would allow for an exception to the requirement that shareholders who do not agree with the majority decision must surrender share certificates to that corporation. For example, if the majority of shareholders agree to sell off the majority of a corporation's assets, the dissenting shareholder is entitled to have the corporation buy back his or her shares. Usually what happens is the dissenting shareholder must surrender the share certificates. However, sometimes the shareholder holds the uncertified shares, so no such surrender can take place. What this proposed amendment provides is an exception to the surrender of share certificates where the dissenting shareholder holds the uncertified shares.

The proposed changes would also, if passed, deal with a takeover bid situation where the purchaser has bought at least 90% of the shares. In these cases, the purchaser is currently entitled to buy out the remaining 10% of the shares and certificates are normally surrendered to the purchaser. The amendment we are proposing would make a similar exception to the requirement to surrender share certificates.

0910

Other proposed amendments to the Business Corporations Act would, if passed, transfer seven regulation-making powers from the Lieutenant Governor in Council

to the Minister of Government Services. Similar amendments are proposed for the Business Names Act, the Corporations Information Act, the Extra-Provincial Corporations Act and the Limited Partnerships Act.

Let me say now a few words about some of the amendments relating to the Ontario Energy Board Act. A proposed amendment to the Ontario Energy Board Act would support our government's Open for Business initiative by improving clarity for businesses. It would help the province move forward with its commitment to a green economy by removing some of the uncertainty in the act that may have discouraged local distribution companies from proceeding with clean, renewable energy projects.

Let me say a few words about the Employment Standards Act, 2000, and the amendments relating to it. There is a proposed amendment to replace "week" with the words "work week" under the Employment Standards Act. If passed, this would ensure consistent wording and interpretation among the provisions in the act and its regulation. The amendment would make the language in the section consistent with the Ministry of Labour's long-standing interpretation, which is that overtime pay entitlements under the act are determined with reference to the employee's established workweek and not to any period of seven days.

Let me say a few words about the amendments relating to the Education Act. The Ministry of Education is proposing technical amendments that would, if passed, rescind the outdated Essex County French-language Secondary School Act, 1977—and I know that may be of particular interest to the Speaker—which is now redundant, since the province created the French-language school boards serving that area.

Another proposed amendment, to the definition of "French-language instructional unit," would, if passed, correct a previous drafting inconsistency in the Education Act. It would clarify the minister's authority in relation to the permission given to school boards to offer French immersion programs. This would clarify the intent of the legislation for both English and French school boards in the context of extended day programming and full-day kindergarten.

Let me say a few words about some of the amendments relating to the Evidence Act. The proposed changes to the Evidence Act would, if passed, help courts adjust to new technology in court reporting and transcribing services. As well, a proposed change to the Occupational Health and Safety Act would, if passed, repeal sections that refer to outdated technology such as telegrams. When is the last time anyone in this chamber, or indeed, in Ontario, dealt with the concept of telegrams?

A few words about the Occupational Health and Safety Act: There are several other amendments proposed under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. These changes would, if passed, help to clarify the legislation and ensure consistent wording.

As a part of Ontario's and Canada's participation in a global program to systematically classify and label chem-

icals, proposed changes would, if passed, unify technology to bring Ontario in line with the global system.

In conclusion, we are proposing to update our laws to clarify them, make technical amendments, and strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of government operations. It's important that we keep the law in step with the needs of society and Ontario.

The ambition here in Ontario with our Open for Business Act is to make Ontario a jurisdiction where everyone wants to do business. One way that we do that is to, from time to time, comb through various statutes and clean out the inconsistencies. We bring some rationalizations; we update those statutes. We want to make our laws in Ontario at the leading edge of what works best for business, what works best for the citizens and what will truly make Ontario a leading economy in the global context.

I encourage all members of this Legislature to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I was wondering which set of hearings the member was at, because he described a set of circumstances that were totally different than my recollection of the hearings. I'll be speaking about this in a few minutes, and I'll bring to the attention of the House and the listening audience the people who came into the hearings and talked about how they were being bullied, how they were being mistreated by the government, how they lived in fear in the province of Ontario and how this bill wasn't going to change anything.

The substantive amendments that were put in place—that were moved and seconded and discussed and then voted down by the Liberal majority on the committee—that would have solved some of those problems for people who serve in the alcohol and gaming industry were just totally ignored by this government as they rammed this bill through committee and ignored the amendments that would have given some of the hardest-working and lowest-paid workers in Ontario some satisfaction that they wouldn't be out of work next week for a period of one week or 45 days or 60 days.

This bill had the opportunity to move toward equity and fairness in that industry, and they totally ignored the myriad of individuals who came to the committee, asking that the committee move in this direction. They were totally ignored by this committee.

So I wonder which committee the member from Willowdale was at when he talks about the positive changes that this government brought in, because certainly in the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario's area of responsibility, there are no positive changes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I heard the presentation this morning from my colleague the member from Willowdale, who, of course, prior to his election here in 2003 had a very distinguished career as a member of the Law Society of Upper Canada, being a lawyer.

When I look at this, it harkens me back to the period of time when I was a municipal councillor. You have by-laws that sit on books. I know in our particular case there were by-laws that sat on books for almost 50 or 60 years, and there comes a time when those by-laws need to be culled; they need to be looked at. They need to have language that's more relevant to the current day. The Good Government Act, 2010, does a lot to go through various parts and regulations of 70 pieces of legislation that provide a framework to how Ontario operates each and every day.

One of the things that I would find helpful, going through this process, of course, is using language that is readily understood. I think nothing frustrates people more than when they look at specific pieces of legislation and the language is either not clearly understood or perhaps it could have several meanings. So the opportunity to go through these various statutes, clean up the language and make it more straightforward will certainly assist us each and every day here in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to see you in the chair.

Bill 110 was first introduced on October 5. It actually was in hearings on November 22 and 29, and today we're at the final stage, I guess.

I'm waiting very patiently for the member from Halton, our critic on this file, who carries another bill—an omnibus bill, I might add—that strikes down a number of existing regulations and sections.

0920

My section specifically, which I'm not sure the member for Willowdale commented on, is under the Ministry of Government Services. There are actually five schedules where what they're doing—suspiciously, I add—is transferring the decision-making ability. In one case here it says that the director or registrar, as the case may be, may now delegate their duties or powers to any public service employee under part III of the Public Service Act of Ontario. I had a question this week which was about the control of licensing information and 93 cases of violations. I don't want them to give up this authority; I want it done properly.

Under the Business Corporations Act, the regulatory power of the Lieutenant Governor in Council with respect to certificates, documents, forms and their manner of acceptance is transferred to the minister.

I've become suspicious, because over the last seven years under the current government I've noticed a number of cases, whether it's eHealth or whether it's the OLG or the WSIB—these are all code languages. But in each case, the Auditor General has to step in. Now, I'm waiting: Next week, the AG is going to report again. I'm wondering what he'll find out, because in the last while it seems like the Premier has sort of lost his focus. This bill here is loosening up some of the controls, and that's troublesome.

I'm sure our member from Halton will point out very specifically some examples of things that we should all be worried about.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Willowdale, Mr. Zimmer, spoke about the Good Government Act. He said, "This is an act that promotes good government and a government that's open for business." I would just like him to comment on what a good government does when food banks are growing.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Mr. Zimmer? Mr. Zimmer, you're not listening. You won't be able to respond to this.

Food banks are growing and people are lining up on a daily basis. What is your good government doing about those things, and what is your good government bill going to do for public housing? You know, 140,000 people are lining up.

What is your good government doing for pensions? You understand, people are losing their pensions. The defined benefit plan—we don't have it, and 75% of the people don't have it; in fact, those who do are going to lose those pensions.

I wonder whether you could comment on those things, including the fact that wages are diminishing by the year, which means the middle class is going to become extinct in the next 10 years. You might want to comment on what your good government is doing about that, and the fact that you're giving \$5 billion away to the corporations and what that does for the middle class, in terms of how those corporate taxes are helping the middle class.

You might want to comment on the harmonized sales tax and how that's whacking people beyond their ability to pay. You might want to comment on the hydro rates shooting through the roof as the middle class is shrinking and getting whacked by good Liberal policies.

Mr. Zimmer from Willowdale, if you could just comment on those things, it would make me feel a little better.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Willowdale, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. David Zimmer: One of the themes in the debate on this bill over first, second and third reading—indeed, today—is that it's essentially a housekeeping bill. It's incumbent on all governments who form the government of the day to, from time to time at regular intervals, comb through the volumes of legislation on the books and to amend, to clean up, to disregard, to adjust those acts and the regulations made pursuant to those acts so that we don't drown under a pile of legislation that perhaps no longer serves its purposes. In my remarks, I went through a number of the acts and the amendments that we're proposing, and you will see that in each case the proposed amendments are designed to modernize the application of the act, eliminate inconsistencies and make the legislation relevant to how the real world operates today in Ontario. Just by example, I made reference to something

having to do with our adjusting and eliminating the use of telegrams in some procedures. I use that as an example of how we are trying to modernize our legislation. When was the last time anyone dealt with a telegram in this age of email and BlackBerrys and so on? So—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I say to the member for Trinity-Spadina that I didn't hear the member for Willowdale say anything about the whacking of—

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Would you like to get unanimous consent to have more time? I don't think he wants it.

This bill, of course, has seven different schedules and speaks to—in an omnibus bill like this, quite often there are many sections that are very worthy. But the opportunity doesn't come along every day to speak to every one of those schedules.

What I would like to do is go through some of the people who attended the committee—what they talked about, what they asked for and how they asked for it—and you can make up your mind as to whether or not it was a reasonable ask, and then you can make up your mind as to whether or not the government did the right thing when they didn't pass a lot of amendments and brought this bill back for third reading in something less than pristine condition.

Every time I speak to a Liberal Good Government Act, it's a bit of an irony and it leaves me a little bit amused. I wonder sometimes whether this government made it back from Woodstock. I'm not sure that some of the younger generation who might be listening understand that, but of course the time of Woodstock, 1968, was a wonderful time.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Were you there?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I might have been there. It wasn't far from where I lived at that time. In actual fact, no, I was not there, although I was there in spirit. But it was a time of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. A small percentage of the people who were at—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Can you say that in here?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I believe that is parliamentary.

Some people who went to Woodstock just never really got home again. They got lost in the haze of the 1960s and just never quite made it home. I remember being in an establishment in the 1980s or so, and there was a chap sitting at the bar who had never quite made it home from Woodstock. He was quite amusing, but quite a sad situation as well.

I wonder, sometimes, when this government brings in a Good Government Act whether or not this government has a firm grasp on reality. That's what we mean when we say this government never made it home from Woodstock. "Liberal" and "good government" just don't go together all the same time, and that won't change no matter how often the party opposite writes it on paper.

Bill 110, the Liberal Good Government Act, is a good example of this. The Liberal response to the concerns of

businesses and employees from across Ontario who spoke to members of the committee considering this bill was an example of bad and unresponsive government, in my opinion. Deputants told the committee about their negative experiences and the implications for employees, and we even heard from employees themselves who rely on their jobs to put food on the table for their families or pay their rent, or indeed to pay their tuition.

Many of these people work in the service industry, such as Gyneva Dicks, an employee from Ottawa working in a restaurant, who told the committee, "As employees, we represent the most vulnerable group that has faced the consequences of the actions of the AGCO in the past, and we will continue to do so in the future. That is why we urge you as our representatives to take our concerns seriously."

0930

She went on to say, "These closures"—and this is when a bar or a restaurant serves alcohol in a manner which is deemed to be inappropriate by the inspector, and the inspector then issues an order, which goes through a kangaroo-type court where you negotiate the penalty and you try to negotiate a closure of the bar for as short a period of time; that's what she's referring to. And, yes, the owner of the establishment is punished, but so too are the innocent employees. She says, "These closures result in innocent employees, such as us, facing the prospect of scrambling to pay bills and put food on the table. This is the fear that we live with on a day-to-day basis, and the consequences of the actions of a government agency funded by us as hard-working taxpayers, many of whom make minimum wage and work long hours on weekends and late nights when the bureaucrats at the AGCO are enjoying the luxurious benefits afforded under the Ontario public service."

I give you the sunshine list of those 100-odd employees at the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario who make in excess of \$100,000 a year, and I see that Jean Major, the chief executive officer, makes \$243,899.93, with an additional \$14,481.30 in bonuses. That's well over \$260,000 a year. Her decisions can put a waitress making minimum wage out of business for a week, two weeks, 45 days, whatever the suspension of that restaurant's licence is, and this person is saying that that's just not fair.

We go on and hear from Rina Angelstand, an employee from London. She told the committee: "I myself have been employed in the hospitality industry for 21 years, and I support my family this way. If I was to lose work due to a licence being pulled for an infraction that may not have occurred under my influence"—or under her watch or when she was on duty—"I would not be able to put food on the table. During the time I would be off of work, I would not be able to afford to secure a position for my children in daycare. The way that daycare works in Ontario, generally, if you cannot secure a position, they do not save a space for you to return. If I was to be off work even as little as two weeks, this could affect my ability to return to work as I'd have to pull my

child from the daycare, as I'm not making money and I can't pay for daycare. Then when my position becomes available at work again, there's nowhere for my daughter to go." Now, she's a welfare mom, receiving welfare, staying at home "totally against action of my own and against my will."

Did the government listen to this person? No. Did they pass amendments that we put forward that would have influenced the position this woman finds herself in? No, they did not. And, yes, that amendment was put forward. Did it pass? No, it did not.

Adam Barnard, who is a student at Waterloo, told the committee: "Pretty much any amount of time off caused by suspension"—and "suspension" means the closure of the bar that he works in—"even if it was no cause of my own, would pretty much make it impossible for me to pay tuition for next term." These are people who work hard. They work long for little pay, and they count on these jobs on a carefully budgeted lifestyle.

Again, did the government listen? I don't believe they did. Were there amendments put forward that would correct this situation? Yes, there were. Our party, the PC Party, put those amendments forward, and did they pass? No, they did not.

Michael Lerner, a London-based lawyer, told the committee, "My clients strongly believe in enforcement and believe that the liquor laws in this province ought to be enforced. What we're asking you is not to allow establishments that break the law to get away with it. We're not asking you to weaken the laws as they presently exist. What I'm asking you to do is, as the group before us did, put another bullet in the chamber of the adjudicative tribunal so it can fine, as well as revoke and suspend licences."

He went on to say, "The fact that it puts employees out of work, in my humble opinion, puts the people who can least afford it out of work. These are people who actually work for less than minimum wage because they factor in the fact that they are going to get tips and gratuities. You have students, as the student who sat in this very chair before me. You have single parents. You have people who have established a family business, who have no record."

He also said, "If we're going to punish, let's punish the offender, not the innocent people who may not even be at work when the offence is committed."

A compelling argument, a very compelling argument, and I ask you, did the government listen to this compelling argument? No, they did not. Was there an amendment?

Hon. John Gerretsen: How do you know? How do you know who listens to what?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm telling the member from Kingston. Did you listen?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Yes.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: There was an amendment put forward that would have fixed this situation. Did you vote for that amendment? Did you pass that amendment? I say to the member for Kingston, he did not pass that amendment—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Halton and the minister: I feel left out of this conversation, so I'd like to be included in it.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Mr. Speaker, he did not fix that situation. He had an opportunity to fix that situation and that member from Kingston did not fix that situation.

Hon. John Gerretsen: It didn't need fixing.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Fixing that situation was a no-brainer. Obviously this government is not the shiniest penny in the roll—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Minister. Come to order.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Did they listen? No, they did not. Was there an amendment presented? Yes, there was. Did it pass? With a Liberal majority on the committee, no, it did not, sadly.

The Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association: This association has been around for many, many years and is one that has great respect in the halls of this place. They also spoke to the committee, and on their behalf Tony Elenis said, "The transfer of hearings from the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario "to the Licence Appeal Tribunal is a positive step to address this conflict and bias. However, the government must not overestimate this measure as one that will resolve licensee concerns."

Tony asked; were you listening? Were you listening? Will it solve the problem? Mr. Elenis says no, it will not solve the problem. Was there an amendment presented that would have solved this problem? Yes, there was an amendment presented, by the opposition, the PC government, the PC Party—

Hon. John Gerretsen: PC government?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm a little ahead of myself.

Was there an amendment presented? Yes, there was. And did it pass? No; no, it did not pass, because this government didn't listen to Tony Elenis.

The Ontario Restaurant and Bar Association spoke to the committee, and on their behalf, John Couse said, "Specifically with regard to Bill 110, we are here to ask you three things"—now, this is very important. This was one of the best presenters, I thought; one of the most distinct presenters at the hearings. He said, "We're here to ask you three things: First, that the proposed separation of the adjudication function of the AGCO to the licensing tribunal be carried through; second, that the licensing tribunal be given the authority to levy fines in place of suspensions"—and I point out that suspensions, in this, means the suspension of the liquor licence, which basically closes the restaurant for some period of time. So he wants fines levied in place of suspensions—"and third, that the roles of the CEO and registrar be held by two people instead of the current one person."

0940

What happens here is that the judge and the policeman are indeed the same person; the CEO and the registrar are the police and the judge, and they're the same person. You can have no fairness in a system where that exists.

That's the third thing that they're asking: that those two positions be severed. Was that done? No, it wasn't. Was there an amendment? Yes, there was an amendment. Did it pass? No. The Liberal domination on the committee failed to pass that amendment.

There was also an amendment that would have allowed the registrar to levy fines in place of suspensions. I ask you, did that pass? No, that amendment did not pass. You take all of these things in combination, and it seems to develop a position where this government was not listening to the deputants who came before the committee and gave their opinions on these very important matters.

On behalf of the service staff of restaurants, hotel restaurants, Alex Munro said: "The government has already recognized that there should be a separation of powers at the commissioner's level, but because of the apprehension of bias and lack of effective governance, it should go further and eliminate the root cause of it. We ask how you can allow such a situation to prevail in Ontario when a separation of powers is fundamental to maintaining trust and integrity of the judicial or adjudicative system you oversee as legislators." This is in reference to the CEO and the registrar.

There were amendments presented. Did the government listen? No. Were there amendments presented? Yes, there were amendments. Did they pass? No, they did not pass, because this government did not listen.

Mike Smith came before the committee and said: "Almost all of the operators that I talk to from across the province don't feel this is being driven by the local inspectors or local offices. They feel it is coming from the top down. Most every licensee wants rules and regulations to protect good operators from the less honourable ones." This is the basis of all law in Ontario and indeed in all civilized societies. We want law and order to protect the just from those who would cut a corner or two, and this is what Mike Smith wants as well. They want rules and regulations to protect good operators from the less honourable ones. "We want to work with the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario to make our operations the best they can be. What we don't want is to be afraid of them, and that is the way we feel right now."

That was Mike Smith who said that. The government would be very wise to listen. There were amendments put forward, and those amendments didn't pass, because this government isn't listening to people like Mike Smith from across this province.

Mike Wilson also attended the committee hearings. Mike Wilson runs a bar and restaurant—a couple of them actually. He is from Brix Napa Valley Grille and Wine Bar Nava Restaurant and Bar. He said to the committee: "Well, we understand from the industry associations that what the government is trying to do with Bill 110 is fix some of the problems with the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario. Frankly, I believe this falls way short of fixing the problems that our employees and our businesses face. There are no accountability provisions for oversight of the CEO and registrar, the actions of his agents, and no measure of independent verification of

their actions. I stress the word ‘independent.’” These are his words; these are Mike Wilson’s words. “There is no independence. Essentially, you’re telling us, through Bill 110, that you know there are problems with the AGCO; indeed your own review has said that. But spending money on an appeal against well-paid government lawyers and hoping to win at the Licence Appeal Tribunal is futile.”

Of course, one of the examples he used in the committee was that the inspector was in his place and a woman was walking across the floor, going to the washroom, and she tripped. She had very high heels on and she tripped and stumbled. She caught herself on the way down. She did not fall, but caught herself on the way down. The inspector said, “You’re overserving. This woman is intoxicated; you’re overserving her,” and he wrote up a citation for the restaurant. When they checked, they found out that this woman was on her second drink. She had not had two drinks; she was simply on her second drink.

It’s very, very difficult under the current system to fight that charge. Once you’re written up by an inspector, it goes to what the industry calls the “kangaroo court,” where the judge and the police officer who arrested you are sitting in judgment on you and all you can do is negotiate a minimum suspension, if at all possible.

When you go to these tribunals, of course, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario is fast to tell you, “You’re coming in and you simply have to present your case. You have to tell what the situation was, as you saw it. You don’t need expensive lawyers to go before the tribunal. You can represent yourself.”

Hon. John Gerretsen: Oh, you’ve got to have a lawyer.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: No, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario says that you don’t need expensive lawyers; it doesn’t have to be expensive. If that is true, why does the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario bring three, four or five lawyers sometimes to these hearings?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Because they want to win.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Well, they’ve already got it rigged up pretty good, because they very seldom lose. The member for Kingston says they do that because they want to win. They want to abuse the people of Ontario, and for some reason the member from Kingston thinks that’s somewhat amusing. The way this government has treated business, across the whole spectrum of businesses, is anything but amusing to the people of Ontario, and they will soon have their time. We’ll soon find out how they feel about that.

Mike Wilson also said, “The problem is not solved at the hearing level. Currently, licensees refer to the AGCO ... as a ‘kangaroo court’ where the rules change from regular court and the chance of leaving with a positive result is virtually impossible. This makes it a complete waste of time and money.”

“As a licensee, you avoid the hearing process altogether and just try to negotiate a deal to minimize the

penalty. The penalty is usually a suspension where they close your business for one day, one week, 45 days, 60 days; or they just take your liquor licence away. That puts a lot of people out of work and can create an insurmountable financial strain on an already recession-weary business.”

He continued on to say, “It emanates from the bureaucratic level. There are no checks and balances on the AGCO, and even if you want to, you can’t because their own board appointees can’t question the CEO on operational matters.” They want to win, all right. They’ve got it set up so they can’t lose.

He goes on to say, “If the board can’t do it, imagine the situation we are in”—people who operate bars and restaurants. “We live it every day. It’s called fear, intimidation and bullying, and if you stand up against them, you’re punished with more visits by the AGCO, more harassment by AGCO personnel, more stress on your staff and management, loss of sales, and increased legal bills to the point where they just run you out of business.”

0950

Did the government listen to Mike Wilson? No. Were there amendments presented that would have helped solve this problem? Yes, there were. Did they pass at the committee level? No, they did not; they were voted down by the Liberal majority on the committee. It is a surprise that the Liberal Party didn’t at least listen to Mike Wilson, who acknowledged: “At our establishments, we have had many events, including parties for Premier Dalton McGuinty; John Manley when he was the Minister of Industry” in the Liberal government in Ottawa; “our member of Parliament, Bryton Wilfert; Frank Scarpitti, mayor of Markham; Michael Joliffe when he was president of the Ontario Liberal Riding Association; and the Young Liberals of Canada.” This man has covered his bases. He’s had fundraisers for all the Liberals. In return, all he got was hassled to the point where he’s had to close his restaurant on occasion, where his employees have been out of work through no fault of their own. The government wouldn’t listen.

I asked Mr. Wilson if he’d ever had a PC fundraiser at his establishments? He said no, he hadn’t, but he was certainly open to the possibility. He represents—

Interjections.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: If the government was wise they’d be listening because he represents a tremendous number of Ontarians who are fed up with this government because of the way they’re being treated and because this government won’t listen.

Having heard these concerns, the PC Party responded by drafting motions amending Bill 110 that would ensure that public safety remains paramount while improving fairness for licensees and their hard-working employees. We heard and we accepted that this is the tip of the iceberg. We accept that a full review may be needed. But we listened and took the first steps.

I may very well be sharing my time this morning, probably with the member for Durham, if he were to step

back in the Legislature for a moment. Hopefully he is listening from the—maybe somebody will go get him.

We heard and we accept that this is the tip of the iceberg. We accept that a full review may be needed. But we listened and we took the first step by putting amendments before the committee, and this government didn't listen. It's not only sad politically; it's sad for the people of Ontario, those people who came with heart-rending stories, who said that they've been out of work through no fault of their own for two weeks, when they're living hand to mouth, paycheque to paycheque.

It could have been solved, not by letting people off, not by letting owners who would cut corners get away with something, but simply by changing the penalty from a suspension of licence—a closing of the facility which punishes all of the employees—to fining them; to putting a fine in place that would be equally as hurtful. I'm sure there are formulas that could be worked out that would be equally as hurtful to the owners when they try to cut a corner. How did the Liberal government respond? They voted against our motions.

The PC Party has called for fairness, and fairness, in this respect, is very simply just good government, but it's good government that this bill and this Liberal government don't seem to be interested in. You had an opportunity to make a difference and you fell short; you fell far short.

Interjection.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm afraid the member for Willowdale is making light of the situation. The member for Willowdale, it's on your head that single mothers and students are out of work through no fault of their own, because you wouldn't listen at committee, you wouldn't put forward amendments and you wouldn't pass those amendments.

That member, more than most, because he was vice-chair of the committee—he was the point man on the committee and he failed to listen. In a government that fails to listen, that member, from Willowdale, failed to listen more than most.

I'm afraid this summarizes why "Liberal" and "good government" never fit properly together. No matter how hard that party may try to make appearances and to deceive the people of Ontario, it just won't work.

If you go by recent polls, they seem to be showing that the public does feel uncomfortable with this government. I would point out to this government that much of that discomfort, no matter what the issue is, whether it's electricity, whether it's the taxes, whether it's this, that or the other thing—there's a myriad of them that people are upset about. But the basis, the commonality, amongst all those things is that this government stopped listening to the people of Ontario.

I suppose this shows all of us that this is in fact not a good government, and that the Premier and his Liberal Party are perhaps not the shiniest pennies in the roll.

I would now ask the member for Durham to make some comments on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Chair recognizes the member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm so pleased that the member from Halton—he and I have been here, some would say too long, but certainly since 1995. And his enthusiasm in standing up for those vulnerable persons in our society, and families, is not surprising. It's always been his consistent reference: "How does this affect my most vulnerable constituents?"

It's in that vein that I think his remarks with respect to the testimony he presented, or listened to and presented here, on the single parent is commendable, and I thank him for that advocacy.

This bill, again, is under the suspicious shadow of being an omnibus bill. Furthermore, there seems to be a bit of a time sensitivity component to this as well. As has been said, there are 36 pages; it's seven sections. It's dealing with pretty well all the major ministries. I want to go through it, because it's a good time to review where we are.

Schedule 1 is a broader area: It's the Ministry of the Attorney General. It imposes monetary penalties under section 14.1 of the Alcohol and Gaming Regulation and Public Protection Act, 1996, which he spoke about. The hearings of matters under the Gaming Control Act, 1992, all of which—he was giving some testimony about the conditions in the bar where the employees are assuming some of the responsibilities under that.

The Evidence Act as well is amended to shift regulation-making authority under the subsection from the Lieutenant Governor to the Attorney General specifically. That's a bit troubling, because we've had—the member from Halton, being a critic in that area, has raised several times issues that have been thrown out of the courts or not addressed or saying that they haven't had enough resources. We all remember the assistant crown attorney who was pictured in the paper, rather arrogantly, if you will, tossing the scarf carefully over his shoulder, who was laughing and grinning and disrupting a trial about a mother who had a daughter who had died. The charge, I guess, was that she was—and I thought it was completely inflammatory, if not—some other accusation, I guess, could apply too. But the jury members seemed to be upset.

Now, he could have made some—in this section here, I won't get carried away. It shifts it to—perhaps that's a good thing here.

The Justice of the Peace Act: This one here is another one. I raise this because I have raised it in caucus. "Subsection 2.1(12) of the act is amended to change the process for applying for justice of the peace positions and reviewing these applications. Subsection (12.1) is added to the section to address transition. Obsolete transition provisions in the section are repealed."

1000

Under that, I want to make it very clear: I think highly of those who serve in the role of justices of the peace. In fact, if I wasn't so old, I would probably be seeking one of those myself. I would say that the person should meet certain criteria and qualifications and be reviewed by the judiciary panel, I guess. They don't necessarily have to

be lawyers. I know a lot of good people—I know some personally. In fact, I want to put it on the record here that my cousin Mike O'Toole from Peterborough—and Jeff Leal often refers to him; I'm sorry the member for Peterborough is not here—served for a good number of years.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham knows that we don't refer to a member's presence or absence.

Mr. John O'Toole: Pardon me. In that respect, I won't refer to Jeff Leal, because—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Or by name, for that matter.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member for Peterborough. Mr. Speaker, in deference to your future participation here, I respect your ruling and always do. My point being, though, that Mike served, I would say, very commendably, not because he's a relative of mine. He probably would disown me.

But I say that in—I know several others, too, who have served and served, I believe, competently, because there's a great deal of training that enters into that before they're able to make decisions on a bail hearing or on Highway Traffic Act offences. It's mostly provincial offences where they're not at the Superior Court level. Often it's pre-trial hearings and bail and release things that they're dealing with.

The thing is, with the justice of the peace part, I still believe that the Premier and the Attorney General could appoint people who meet the smell test. If we disembark this privilege of appointing, some members who leave here—some are leaving. In fact, the Speaker will be leaving, and there's others who have said they're leaving. There's about nine people who won't run in the next election so far. There will probably be a lot more. I look over at the member for Northumberland—Quinte West. He might be—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, look, I'm only saying here, and I say it respectfully, that he has served as a mayor, and he's served well. He's here. His constituents respect him. I would say that he continues to serve. I think he would be easily and objectively appointed to sit as a justice of the peace.

Quite frankly, I'm being quite specific here: When we leave here, we do have a pension of a sort. A group RRSP is what it is, really. It's a defined contribution plan. What I'm saying there is that this would not buy much of an annuity. There's no pension as you know it. That's all history, and as it is, it might have been a mistake that Mike Harris made. I would say it right here on the record. I say it here—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: They're saying that we voted for it. Well, there are a few things they voted for where they're going to sort of, I would say, rue the day. One of them might be Bill 135, that other bill that was time-allocated yesterday. They will rue the day.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Did you vote the wrong way?

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, in that case I did. To the member from Kingston and the Islands: I did, in fact, out of respect for everyone here.

I don't want to be distracted from the point I'm trying to make, and that easily happens, my point being the appointment of certain members who meet criteria. I know the member from Kingston and the Islands, the minister, was the mayor of Kingston. He's a qualified lawyer, a member of the bar and the law society, I guess. But I would say that they could easily be—and should be—eligible for appointment. I say that publicly here and now, because they can serve the public. All politicians aren't completely useless. I would say they can serve and continue to serve the public in a less obviously political way, and I say that respectfully.

Section 2 is another one; it's a section that does trouble me. Some of the stuff gets a bit technical. Even for myself, I have to read it, but I help the public by reading it in layman's interpretation here. Under this one here, the Business Corporation Act—I'm not going to spend much time on it—it says, "The definition of 'auditor' in subsection 1(1) of the act is amended to include not only a partnership of auditors but also an auditor that is incorporated." There are different rules of liability when one is incorporated. That's really what's happening here.

"Several provisions are updated to reflect the fact that notice of a change of location of the registered office must now be filed under the Corporations Information Act rather than the Business Corporations Act."

In small business, here's the deal: When you're dealing with these arcane rule changes, small businesses could find themselves in a problem. Now, how do they find this? All these regulations are gazetted. A lot of small businesses don't read those things, so it sounds like a fair amount of red tape to me. I don't disparage all red tape, but I think often they have to take the time and have the flexibility not to penalize very small businesses that are incorporated under the Business Corporations Act for not being aware of the law. Ignorance is no excuse of the law; I understand that. But certainly there should be, within the authority of the Attorney General or the minister, the ability not to prosecute because of sincere ignorance of the law in these cases of whether or not they're registered and have filed appropriately.

I'd say that under the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act this thing here is a piece of housekeeping, really: "The Registrar no longer requires the approval of the director to require a motor vehicle dealer to file a financial statement under section 24 of the act." I think that's good; it's elimination of paperwork there.

The Payday Loans Act: "... section 52 of the act which allows the director under that act to make freeze orders." Well, I'm not big on the payday loan operations anyway—period. I have no time for them at all. I don't care who set them up.

TICO, the Travel Industry Act: That's another one. It's a very important one here. A lot of people don't even know that travel insurance, the travel industry, under

TICO, the Travel Industry Council of Ontario, can insure certain things if they're registered members. Here's what it says: "The schedule clarifies that the other services mentioned in the definition of 'travel services' must be combined with transportation or sleeping accommodation for the use of a traveller, tourist or sightseer." In fact, that is important. There are a lot of online businesses that are not members, so I guess the most important advice here is just to pay for it with your credit card; often your credit card will insure your trip.

Schedule 3, the Ministry of Education: "The schedule amends the act to clarify that the definition of 'French-language instructional unit' does not include a program established under paragraph 25.1 of subsection 8(1), which authorizes the minister to permit boards to establish for English-speaking pupils extended day programs involving the use of French." This is allowing some of the programs that they have under that child credit, the \$50 credit—you can spend up to \$500 and get \$25 or \$50 back for language training in a second language. That's probably not a bad idea, if families want to pay, and that's what it's about.

With respect to "English-speaking pupils programs involving the use of French, the minister may impose terms and conditions on the permission." I'd say something a little bit radical here. When I look around Ontario in the 15 years I've been here, I've actually been around in Timmins and various places in northern Ontario where you'll often find boards will have sparse populations, all four panels—remember in Ontario they have four panels: English, French, public and separate, so there are four panels. Now, French immersion then becomes an issue. With French immersion, you have to have a parent whose first language is French to actually go to the French system. I'm not sure that's a good idea, personally. If you really want to learn French—I lived in Quebec for a while—go to a French-language school; you'll learn French, guaranteed, especially if you're a child.

French immersion, which is partial programming—I have a couple of grandchildren in the program—there you go. I think that's something you could change or look at in the future to improve French language penetration: allowing children who fully understand—the school would be entirely French, from recess to report cards to whatever would be in French, and parents should have the option to go there, even if their first language is not French. The children should be able to go. That's what I think. It works in northern Ontario. Go around. They have schools that have public, separate, French and English all in the same school. Some of the kids in French language actually take the math courses because they don't have enough kids to offer the program unless they all work together. That's good business. I think it's good for the students and it's good for the community that wants to have a school that offers calculus at grade 11 or whatever, otherwise it wouldn't be offered. I'll leave that alone.

1010

Schedule 4, the Ministry of Energy: Now there's a ministry that needs a bit of attention—a lot of attention. I

would say that the Ontario Energy Board has been rendered kind of useless, actually. I shouldn't say that, because I know people—competent, qualified people—on the energy board.

Here's what it says here: "Clauses 71(3)(a) to (c) of the act are re-enacted to provide that an electricity distributor may own and operate a renewable energy generation facility, a generation facility that uses technology that produces power and thermal energy from a single source or an energy storage facility whether or not any criteria for the facility have been prescribed by regulations."

Actually, energy distributors, as we would know, are Hydro One, Toronto Hydro, Veridian or several larger distributors. These are the ones that take the power from the big wires—the transmission system—to the distribution system, which is the smaller wires that deliver to homes and businesses. What the bill is saying is that Toronto Hydro can have—which it does—a wind turbine at the Exhibition grounds that generates energy, and it's owned, I believe, as well as thermal energy, which would be the deep-shore water retrieval program in Lake Ontario. I'm not sure what it's called; do you know what that's called? That's the big core lines out in Lake Ontario. It's heat transfer; they cool and heat buildings in downtown Toronto from Lake Ontario. I think that's under this. It just allows these utilities—I think this is a respectable idea.

I honestly believe that the old system of the large generators, large transmission and now large distributors—the three components of electricity systems from generation to use—could be changed. I don't know why we have great big generators up on the Bruce Peninsula sending all those electrons down that billion-dollar transmission system to Toronto. By the time it gets here, 20% of the energy has dissipated. It's a waste, and you see that on your bill; you have the line loss charge. That line loss charge is because the generator gets paid for all the electrons it dispatches to your house. But when you dispatch one kilowatt, by the time it gets to the house there's only 0.8 kilowatts left. So you're paying for that 20% loss because they have to get paid. They generated it, whether it's through natural gas, hydro or whatever. So I probably agree with that section too.

When you get these omnibus bills, there are sections that are right; generally, the bill has particularly optimal things. But they've slipped in a couple that I can't support. That's the problem: They stick the poison pill in there. They've done it with Bill 135, the other omnibus bill we're dealing with. It's become trouble for them, because they've have to time-allocate it; they're ramming it through. We hear the hearings are going to be on Thursday, the amendments will be moved on Monday and it'll all be done. This is a budget bill. This is a staggering bill.

One section of that bill, a 10% reduction in your energy bill—that's what is in Bill 135. Your bill at home that is \$200 now will have a 10% reduction; it will be \$180. How are they funding that? I often wonder, where is—they forecast revenue based on these things, and now

they're going to cut your bill by 10%. I kind of looked into it—this is worth knowing about Bill 135. The cost of that 10% reduction is \$1.3 billion annually. They have an \$18.3-billion deficit—I mean, they're short. So where are they getting this \$1.3 billion?

Do you know what they did? Teranet, the province of Ontario land registry system—it used to be called Polaris; it's now Teranet. It's a digital system that manages property records for different purposes—assessment. They've sold the rights to MPAC and Teranet—they sold the rights to use it for 50 years and they got \$1.1 billion for that. That's how these things happen. With respect, Speaker—I see you watch very carefully. You keep an eye on me.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm keeping a really close eye on you.

Pursuant to standing order 8(a), this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Government Services on a point of order.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: We would like to have unanimous consent to wear red ribbons.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize John Gignac, a retired firefighter from Brantford, and Pat Folliott; he's from Toronto. They both work for the foundation to support the introduction of carbon monoxide detectors in all homes in Ontario. They will be holding a press conference at noon today. I want to thank John and Pat for being here; they're in the members' gallery.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's an honour for me to introduce Dr. Tom Phillips, who's in the members' east gallery today. Tom is a member of both the faculty at Fleming College and Trent University in Peterborough. A well-known national economist, he also recently was inducted into the Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame in British Columbia. We welcome Tom with us today.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I would like to introduce to the House Erin Torsney, who is here for the day.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have two special guests to introduce to the House today. Albert Wong is the president of AKW Global Enterprises, with many close connections to Chinese entrepreneurs and investors here and abroad. Judy Yeung is an employee of Bell Canada and the volunteer vice-chair of membership for the Mississauga Board of Chinese Professionals and Businesses, the vice-president of the Association for Learning and Preserving the History of World War II in Asia and a volunteer with the Yee Hong foundation. Both Albert and Judy are the

organizers of the annual Phoenix Ball in Mississauga. I'd like members to welcome them to the House.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to welcome and introduce to the House Laverne Brennan, the mother of our page Drew Brennan.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm delighted to introduce a delegation of representatives from the government of Romania and, indeed, of Canadian Romanian organizations. The delegation is here, as all of us know, to raise the colours of the Romanian flag outside at 12 noon, and all the members are invited.

I'm delighted to introduce them to you: Dr. Valentin Naumescu, who is the consul general of Romania, and his wife, Mrs. Naumescu; Mr. George Oprea, who is the president of the Association of Romanian Engineers in Canada; Mrs. Maia Morgenstern, an actress at the Jewish State Theatre in Bucharest; Mr. Tudor Aaron Istodor, an actor; Mr. Dumitru Popescu, a director of the Romanian cultural journal Observatorul; Mr. Rares Pateanu, a professor at York University; Mrs. Roxana Pateanu; and Mr. Doru Liciu, who is the vice-consul. Thank you very much and congratulations on your special day today.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Not precisely an introduction, but more a recognition: On December 1, 1980, my colleague Garfield Dunlop was sworn in for the first time as a councillor in the village of Coldwater. Today marks 30 years for him in elected office and I think he should be congratulated.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Congratulations.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I rise in the House today to welcome the Denlow Public School choir from Don Valley West. They'll be joining us and singing on the main staircase at 12:15 today. I encourage my colleagues to join them in the holiday season songs.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I'm delighted to say that the Legiskaters played hockey last night against Malahide. They won their first game in three years—5 to 3—and we're glad to say that we have familiar faces in here: John O'Toole, Jerry Ouellette, Norm Miller, Steve Clark, Howard Hampton and Bob Delaney, and assistant coach Steve Peters. We won.

Mr. Dave Levac: In the gallery today we have the gentleman who has formed, founded and chairs the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation to raise money for CO detectors. He's a member of the Friends of the Firefighters in Brantford, my friend and former firefighter John Gignac. John, welcome and thank you for being here.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our coach last night, the honourable member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, but also to say thank you to the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek for the even-handed, fair and impartial way he refereed the hockey game last night. The honourable member only warned the water boy twice during that hockey game.

I just want to recognize those players because it was a great win of 5-2 for the Legiskaters. I want to thank the following individuals from Legiskaters side: Bob Delaney, Rob Bongers, Paul Miller, Howard Hampton, Jerry

Ouellette, Norm Miller, Steve Clark, John O'Toole, Steve Paikin, Geoff Turner, Miranda Hussey, Gerry Frenette, Paul Yeung, John Bongers, Scott Lovell, Adam Grachnik, James Berry, Marty Wall, Alex Webster and Matt Cable.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank those who were visiting from Malahide township in my riding: Coach John Wilson, Rob Johnson, Matt Wilson, Johnny Wilson, Brad Smale, Paul Groeneveld, John Hoover, Bill Sleegers, Craig Kalman, Matt Teeple, Mark Steele, Andrew Sleegers, Mike Phillimore, Lloyd Perrin, Tom Marks, Steve Carr and John Smith, who was the bus driver.

Thank you again to the honourable member.

Mr. Jim Wilson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Standing order 40(b) concerning annual reports and other sessional papers states, "The minister concerned shall distribute copies of all reports to all members of the House and copies of any background material to the critics of the recognized opposition parties."

However, yesterday Liberal staffers handed out pamphlets that said there was a 10% savings on hydro bills, when on page 11 of the fall economic statement we are told it's a 46% increase. So I think it only fair to opposition members of this House that the finance minister provide background material that shows the math and explains how a 46% increase is a 10% cut.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member. It is not a point of order.

NOTICES OF REASONED AMENDMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 71(b), the House leader of the official opposition, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, has notified the Clerk of his intention to file notice of a reasoned amendment for the motion for second reading of Bill 141, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act. The order for second reading of Bill 141 may therefore not be called today.

I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 71(c), the House leader of the official opposition, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, has filed notice of a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2010, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts. The order for second reading of Bill 140 may therefore not be called today.

Mr. Jim Wilson: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker: I recall a Speaker's ruling that to hand out material about a piece of legislation that isn't passed—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I've already ruled on that point of order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SMART METERS

Mr. Tim Hudak: The first question is to the Premier. First, on behalf of the PC caucus, we want to thank the Environmental Commissioner for the thorough, helpful and objective report he tabled yesterday.

Premier, his report shows that your well-deserved reputation for making all kinds of promises, then breaking them one by one, once elected, continues. In his report, though, the Environmental Commissioner does note that Premier McGuinty actually hit one target, and that's the installation of his smart meter tax machines.

The Premier missed targets for electronic recycling. You missed your promises on closure of coal plants. You missed your promises on energy conservation and job creation. So, Premier, why is it that the only target that you actually hit is the one that takes more money out of the pockets of Ontario families?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's always good to hear from the man without a plan. I think my honourable colleague opposite in fact recognizes that the Environmental Commissioner fully supports smart meters. In addition to that, I would have thought that my honourable colleague would make reference to the health benefits associated with our coal closure.

I want to refer him to a statement made by the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment. They said, "When you burn fossil fuel, you produce toxic by-products.... The plants also release lead and mercury (brain poisons), dioxin (an endocrine disrupter), chromium and arsenic (carcinogens), and sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide (which cause acid rain)."

You would think that the member opposite would want to stand up and support our plan to do a number of things, including shutting down dirty coal in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, come on. You promised this back in 2007; the coal plants continue now deep into 2010.

Premier, you make all kinds of promises, and then you break them one by one by one once elected. The only plan the Premier has is to squeeze more money out of the pockets of Ontario middle class families, seniors and students.

Premier, let's get back to your smart meter tax machines. You know you were warned by Hydro One and 20 other distributors that there were serious bugs in the system. Measurement Canada, the federal agency, said they had significant concerns. On August 4, the Ontario Energy Board acknowledged the problem. It is a bad plan, off the rails. It's costing Ontario families more and more.

Premier I'll ask you again, why is the only promise you seem to keep is one that will squeeze more money out of the pockets of families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It was my honourable colleague who raised the issue of the environment and I think that we should stick to that.

Let's hear what some of his colleagues have said in the past on the matter of coal. This comes from the MPP for York-Simcoe: "Even if we closed all the coal plants, we would make little difference to air quality...." That's the member for York-Simcoe.

The member for Haldimand-Norfolk: "I ask that the present government not overlook the fact that coal is both affordable and abundant.... There are significant benefits."

Then of course, there's the member for Sarnia-Lambton, who said, "We need more coal."

We bring a decidedly and proudly different approach. We think it's time to move away from coal in Ontario. We think we can lead North America in this effort. We think we owe it to the future, and we owe it to our kids today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, I know this is embarrassing for you and your government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The member from Peterborough, Minister of Education, please come to order. Member from Oxford.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know it's embarrassing for your government that you've made so many promises and then broken them one after the other: electronic recycling promise made, promise broken; closure of coal plants promise made, promise broken; energy conservation promise made, promise broken; job creation promise made, promise broken; not to increase taxes on Ontario families—broken, torn, ripped up, absolutely shredded.

Premier, people simply don't believe the McGuinty government any longer. Now with your smart meter tax machines, we know that Ontario families are paying more as a result. You've heard now from some nine different utilities that they don't want to go ahead with your aggressive plan to take more money out of the pockets of Ontario families.

Premier, why do you believe it's important for people to work for government instead of government working for the families who pay the bills?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Consumer Services. Minister of Labour.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, it's good to hear from the pro-coal party in Ontario. I gather that's what "PC" stands for. Who would have known? I think one of the things that's very important to our families, in addition to clean air and a reliable supply of electricity, of course, are good jobs. Let's just go over our recent record

in that regard: Two weeks ago, we announced 300 jobs at JNE Consulting in Hamilton; a few days ago, it was 150 jobs in Cambridge; yesterday, it was 126 jobs in Essex county; today, it's 700 jobs in Windsor; tomorrow, it's 900 jobs in Tillsonburg.

At the end of the day, we stand by our firm belief that families want clean air, reliable electricity and clean energy jobs, and that's what we stand for.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier of broken promises: Premier, we have a very strong disagreement. You believe that Ontario families should be working harder to pay for more, bigger government; we believe that government should work for the families who actually pay the bills. There's probably no better example than your expensive eco tax experiment. We now see that families are paying eco taxes as high as \$2.75 for a \$10 clock radio. This program has gone badly off the rails, where you're collecting only 2% of recycled material—only 2% of the promise that Premier McGuinty made.

Now, Premier, you're going to be heading into the Christmas season, charging this eco tax on iPods, on iPads, on flat-screen TVs and on DVD and Blu-ray players. Will you have some mercy as we head towards Christmas? Will you abolish this latest eco—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, if they're not talking about holding us and holding Ontario firmly nailed down to the past, where we burn coal, now they're firmly committed and determined to ensure—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier.

And no, the Speaker is not a grinch, by the way, as I heard over there.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: If the party opposite, if the official opposition—not only are they committed to coal, a fuel of the past, but now they're saying they're adamantly opposed to any efforts made by Ontarians collectively to better and properly manage their toxic waste. They're against that. That's not where families stand. I think that families are looking for more plans and fewer pranks; they're looking for action and not antics.

I'll just tell you what we did yesterday on behalf of the people of Ontario. We announced 126 new jobs in Essex county as a result of our investments in green energy. We introduced legislation to prepare our health care system for the next pandemic. We also announced a review of social assistance to help get more Ontarians more jobs more quickly. Today, we're announcing 700 new jobs in Windsor. That's a result of our Green Energy Act and an agreement with Samsung.

That's what leadership is all about. It's about standing up for families. It's about taking action. It's about getting beyond antics and moving beyond pranks, and putting forward solid plans.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, leadership is about keeping your promises, keeping your word, creating jobs in the province of Ontario. Only a Premier as out of touch as Premier McGuinty would defend a \$2.75 tax on a \$10 clock radio. This simply shows a Premier who keeps hitting the snooze button over and over again when it comes to standing up for Ontario families.

Premier, you simply believe that seniors on fixed incomes need to work harder to pay for your bigger and bigger government. The Ontario PCs will stand up for those seniors who are saying, "Enough is enough is enough."

Premier, even the Environmental Commissioner says that your eco tax scam is not diverting from landfills. You have hit 2% of your goal, and if you had report cards with grades, even that is a failure, Premier, by your standards. Will you give families a break as we head toward Christmas and scrap this program that has gone way off the rails?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: No, we won't. We're committed to assuming our responsibility together to ensure that we properly manage toxic waste. We think that's the right thing to do. We're not saying it's an easy thing to do, but we're committed to that on behalf of our families.

In terms of support for families, I want to remind my honourable colleague—it would be nice to have him stand in his place and applaud our efforts—that this month 220,000 students are receiving the \$150 textbook and technology grant. This month, HST transition cheques: Some 6.5 million Ontario families and individuals will receive either \$335 or \$100. Starting in January of next year, there's a 10% clean energy benefit reduction on all electricity bills for five years. There's also our new children's activity tax credit: \$50 per child. Believe me, when it comes to helping families right inside the home, we're there for them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Again, it just shows a Premier so dramatically out of touch with the needs of middle-class families, seniors and students that he's embracing his latest eco tax grab.

We're going to keep the pressure up, and I want to put him on flip-flop alert, because I think this Premier is going to backtrack once again. The sacrifices you make seniors pay, the sacrifices you make families and students pay, Premier, mean that we have to stand up and continually defend the family budget.

Take, for example, your foreign scholarship giveaway. At a time when our sons and daughters are struggling to make ends meet, are struggling to pay the bills, you give away rich \$40,000-per-year scholarships to foreign students. The best and the brightest Ontario students cannot apply. That's wrong, Premier. That money, each and every penny, should go to Ontario students first.

Premier, when will you understand that it's government that should work for the people who pay the bills, not the other way around?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There's more jargon, more slogans, more empty rhetoric, more pranks, more antics. I think Ontario families deserve a lot better than just that. I think they deserve some unwavering commitment to some fundamental values.

For one thing—I'm glad that my honourable colleague has finally had the nerve to raise this—we embrace the global economy. We embrace all those people who have chosen to come to Ontario and help us build this society and our economy. We're after the brain game in the province of Ontario. We're committed to winning this competition. We want the best and the brightest from abroad to come and join the best and the brightest who are right here so that we have an unbeatable combination. It's about pulling the best together so that we can do what we've always done: We'll deliver the most competitive team that we can put on the ice in a global economy, and we'll keep winning.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East should be in his seat. The Speaker doesn't appreciate this. Notwithstanding what some people might think, this is not a zoo, and hearing some of the comments or noises that I just heard, perhaps you should go to Bowmanville.

Interjection: That's a very good zoo.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It is a very good zoo.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order. As well, during the answer from the Premier—I just remind the member from Nepean-Carleton that she should be respectful.

New question. The member from Toronto—Danforth.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. That comment that I just directed to the member from Nepean-Carleton is the same comment that I will direct to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Again, we need to endeavour to be respectful of one another.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not helpful from the member from Halton as well.

New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Premier, homeowners are struggling to pay soaring hydro bills. They need help to reduce energy use and make their bills more affordable. Why is the McGuinty government making life even more difficult for homeowners by ending the home energy savings program, which provides homeowners with rebates on home energy audits and retrofits? Why?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm always pleased to hear from my colleague opposite. My colleague knows—they stood up for months on end and asked that we provide

some support to ratepayers by eliminating the HST. In fact, we've gone further than that. We've put in place a clean energy benefit, which is going to help families and farms and small businesses by 10%; it's 2% more than they originally asked for. We're proud of that. We think it's going to help families through this transition period, as we move to a cleaner electricity system.

My honourable colleague the Minister of Energy has indicated that we're going to shut down this particular program. We've extended it for a certain period of time. We're going to shut it down, but there's going to be more news forthcoming in terms of more supports for our families when it comes to acting in a way that conserves electricity.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario says that uncertainty about the future of the home energy savings program, which was not corrected by that answer, is undermining conservation capacity in Ontario and threatening the survival of companies that perform audits and retrofits, the very ones that will be needed to deliver any program. The commissioner urges the Minister of Finance to tell Ontarians as soon as possible about whether the government will continue the program.

When will the Premier put an end to the uncertainty and tell homeowners what support they'll get to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, instead of waiting until he gets to make an election announcement?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, the program has served its purpose and has reinforced the notion that all of us have a role to play when it comes to using less electricity, and taxpayers have funded a program which brought a lot of families on board.

The other program that is very important for us to continue to pursue is smart meters. It'd be great to have the NDP's support in this regard as well. Progressive jurisdictions around the world have taken advantage of smart meters, to install those in homes and businesses and farms as well. It's one thing that is completely supported by the Environmental Commissioner. So I'd love to hear my honourable colleague stand up right now and say that he's in support of our plan to continue to install smart meters throughout the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Investing in conservation that delivers real results is far cheaper than investing in new supply. It's less damaging to the environment. The government is committed to investing untold, unpredictable billions in new nuclear supply. That adds to an already unaffordable hydro rate. They won't spend a fraction of that on home retrofit programs that could actually make life more affordable for homeowners.

Why does the government put expensive new nuclear supply ahead of cost-effective energy conservation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The NDP is held captive by an ideology that says that they're adamantly opposed to the generation of electricity by means of nuclear reactors.

We don't enjoy that luxury. One half of our electricity in the province of Ontario is generated by nuclear reactors.

I want to say as well that our plan for conservation has one of the most aggressive targets in North America: 7,100 megawatts by 2030. That's the equivalent of taking 2.4 million homes off the grid. The fact of the matter is, it is very, very aggressive. It's going to be a challenge for us to meet that target, but I'm absolutely confident that with the support of the member opposite, including for smart meters as well, we'll do everything that we need to do to achieve that target.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Published reports indicate Toronto's new mayor will meet today with TTC management and slam the brakes on the much-needed light-rail public transit plan. Will the Premier please be clear and explicit to this Legislature and the people of Ontario: What is his government prepared to do to ensure Transit City gets built?

1100

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're going to sit down and meet and we're going to talk. There is a new mayor; there is a new council. The fact of the matter is, they have been duly elected as part of a democratic exercise.

We're going to sit down and find out what it is they would like to do, we'll talk to them about what we would like to do, and we're going to work as hard as we can to find some common ground. I believe both sides are interested in promoting public transit. Both sides want to invest in more public transit. We'll talk about the details in terms of how we'll get there.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Allowing Transit City to be scuttled would be a very grave error on this government's part.

After years and years of waiting, people saw a plan to make their daily commute a little easier. Then the province started backtracking on funding. And now the city wants to back out of the plan, a plan that will provide good jobs for hundreds of workers at Bombardier in Thunder Bay for years to come.

Given what's at stake, why isn't the McGuinty government taking a strong, clear position on saving Transit City?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: If the new, duly elected council, led by their new mayor, comes to us with something different, a different representation on behalf of the people of Toronto who elected that council, is my friend honestly suggesting that we tell them to go away, that we're not prepared to listen to anything they have to say, that they are entirely, exclusively and unremittingly bound to the work of the previous council? I don't think so. I just don't think that's the way democracy works.

Again, we'll sit down, we'll meet, we'll find common ground and we'll find a way to continue to build public transit not only in Toronto but throughout the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: This former mayor and this present MPP thinks that Transit City contracts have already been signed. Work has started. Yet the McGuinty government appears ready to sit back and watch Transit City be stopped dead in its tracks at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars to the taxpayers of this province.

People in parts of Toronto harshly remember the Premier who killed the Eglinton subway. Does this Premier want to go down in history as the one who helped to kill the Eglinton LRT, or will he do the right thing and join with New Democrats to save Transit City?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: If we follow this through to its logical conclusion, the NDP is effectively saying they do not accept the results of the recent municipal election in the city of Toronto. That's what they're saying. They're saying that the new council does not have the legislative and political authority to make decisions regarding the future of public transit in the city.

I think he's got it wrong and I think we've got it right. I think our responsibility is to sit down with the duly elected new council and the mayor to find that common ground.

My colleague the Minister of Transportation has made it perfectly clear that if there are changes to be proposed connected with the original plan, and there are costs associated with that, those will be visited upon the council and the people of Toronto. That will be an important factor for them to take into account.

But again, we're going to bring a lot of goodwill to this discussion. We're committed to more public transit.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Premier. Premier, in February of this year, you said your Green Energy Act will "make it perfectly clear that NIMBYism will no longer prevail when it comes to putting up wind turbines...."

In practice, the rule applies to everywhere in the province but the Minister of Energy's riding in Scarborough. The setback for the rest of the province is 500 metres. This summer, cabinet made an exception in the minister's hometown by creating a five-kilometre setback that appeased families who don't want wind turbines obscuring their view of Lake Ontario.

Did the Minister of Energy declare his conflict of interest and recuse himself from the decision and discussions to keep windmills out of his backyard?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleague knows the difference between the setback requirements for land-based wind turbines and those that are located offshore. There is a difference there. If we focus for a moment on those that are land-based, we have the most aggressive setback requirements in all of North America, and some of the most aggressive in the world. As well, while there can be challenges associated with wind turbines, they're related to location. That's what our setback requirements are designed to address.

But you cannot get beyond the challenges presented to the environment and our health when it comes to burning

coal. It would be nice for the member opposite to stand up on behalf of his party and say, "We're no longer going to burn coal in the province of Ontario. We're going to do everything we can together to shut down all coal-fired generation by 2014." Now, that would be a commitment to the environment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: We're no longer going to break promises in the province of Ontario.

When my colleague the member for Dufferin-Caledon asked the minister about conflict of interest, he just sloughed it off, but it is not up to him to pass judgment on his own conflict or appearance of conflict. In fact, if he brought the issue to cabinet or participated in the discussion to give special treatment to his riding, his judgment is in question and his response to my colleague cannot be trusted. So it falls upon you, Premier: Were you concerned enough about the appearance of conflict to ensure that the minister took no part in any discussions to keep windmills out of his backyard?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: This is a standard, province-wide policy. My honourable colleague is aware of that.

We have one policy for land-based wind turbines. In fact, we have a proposal at this point in time for offshore turbines, and it's one that will apply across the province. So I think it's rather interesting and creative on the part of my colleague to allege what he is alleging, but the fact of the matter is, there are so many Ontarians who live near water throughout the province.

This is something that stands to benefit all of us, and we will be working hard to make sure we get it right offshore, as we have got it right on land.

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Premier: Reports have emerged that the McGuinty government heard about financial improprieties at the Niagara Parks Commission as far back as 2005 and did nothing about it. When did the Premier himself first hear about possible financial improprieties at the Niagara Parks Commission?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question.

Our government has an important responsibility, and that is to ensure that our agencies are accountable to the public and to ensure that our agencies are transparent to the public. On this side of the House we are committed to moving Ontario forward and to working towards strengthening the Niagara Parks Commission. Niagara's tourism industry depends on it, the Ontario tourism industry depends on it and our economy depends on it. We need this agency at its best as we take the necessary steps.

Chair Fay Booker has my full confidence to guide the commission in the right direction and to bring greater accountability and transparency. We are committed to the

people of Niagara Falls and committed to the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: This government's handling of the Niagara Parks Commission scandal has been a complete botch-up, and down where I come from, in Niagara region, struggling families are disgusted with the stories of sole-source deals and executives treating the Niagara Parks Commission as their personal ATM. When will the Premier call in the Auditor General and maybe even the police to get to the bottom of these improprieties?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much again for the question.

To build a stronger tourism industry and to build a stronger economy we need a strong Niagara Parks Commission: one that is more accountable and one that is more transparent. We are moving forward to do just that.

We have a chair who is determined to move the commission in the right direction. In her short time at the Niagara Parks Commission, she has redefined the governance structure for board committees, she has developed a new code of conduct for the board and employees, and she is consulting with residents in Niagara region through public meetings.

Chair Booker has my full confidence to take all necessary action to bring greater accountability and transparency.

1110

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, in Guelph we have a poverty elimination task force composed of many community agencies, including my office. They expect this government to build upon its record of achievements in reducing poverty and supporting Ontario families. We must help people overcome barriers in the long term and provide them with the tools necessary in order to get ahead in life.

The social assistance system has been described by the Premier as one that stomps people into the ground. This system should work better for families, clients and taxpayers. As part of the poverty reduction strategy, it was announced that the social assistance system would be reviewed. What is the status of the social assistance review?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me say thank you to the member for Guelph for her support all through this exercise.

Ontario's two social assistance programs need an update. Yesterday, I announced that we have appointed two very credible people to serve as commissioners of this extensive, 18-month social service review: the honourable Frances Lankin, former Minister of Health; and Dr. Munir Sheikh, an economist, an academic and the former chief statistician of Canada.

This review, the largest in 20 years, is the first step in developing a concrete action plan that will make social assistance more effective at getting people into jobs,

easier to understand, work better with other income security programs and more accountable to taxpayers and fiscally sustainable.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: There have been many concerns raised regarding the elimination of the special diet allowance announced in last year's budget. Many individuals in my riding depend on this dietary allowance that is provided over and above their social assistance entitlement.

Although it is clear that the government must address misuse in this program, we cannot repeat the mistakes of the 1990s, when governments tarred and feathered Ontario's most vulnerable. There are many Ontarians who need our help.

How will we respond to the concerns regarding misuse and the needs of those with serious medical conditions who require additional support for a special diet?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: We do not want to disadvantage people who truly need a special diet to manage their medical condition. We will keep the special diet allowance, and it will be part of the overall social assistance review. It is not the time to start tinkering with social assistance programs as a major review gets underway.

But the status quo is not an option. We must comply with the Human Rights Tribunal decision and also take specific steps to make it more accountable and fair to taxpayers. A new schedule, based on a medical expert panel's recommendations, will come into force on April 1, 2011, and we will work closely with our partners and clients to ensure a smooth transition.

In closing, I want to thank the members of ISAC for their good recommendations and good advice and for being supportive of what we are doing.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The McGuinty Liberals' belief that Ontario families should be working for them instead of government working for Ontario families is so hardwired that they've begun to miss the no-brainers.

The Ontario Real Estate Association confirms that the number of grow operations and drug labs has grown and increased dramatically on the Premier's watch, and on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I put forward a bill that would tell Ontario families if the house that they want to buy was a drug lab or a grow op. Why are you standing in the way of government working for Ontario families who work hard and who play by the rules?

Hon. James J. Bradley: To the Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm aware of your private member's bill. I had a meeting with the Ontario Real Estate Association last Friday, and as I indicated to them, we'll certainly take a look at any bill that may come along to deal with that situation. That's what we intend to do: Take a look at any good idea that comes along and see if we can work it into the system.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: If he acknowledges that my idea is good and that the Ontario Real Estate Association is behind it, why doesn't he just adopt it? They've got the votes on that side of the House to do something about it.

He knows as well as I do in the Ontario PC caucus that a home is the single biggest investment for most Ontario families. Houses that were grow ops or drug labs are often ineligible for insurance coverage, often leaving the families who purchased them helpless. They could be families in Caledon, where \$1.2 million worth of marijuana was found and seized by police last night, or families in Liberal ridings like your own, in Kingston, Peterborough and London, where several times a month police are uncovering grow ops.

The McGuinty Liberals make Ontario families work for them with their civil asset forfeiture scheme. How about the McGuinty Liberals working for Ontario families by creating the grow op registry that will help protect homes across Ontario?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, let me be absolutely clear: We will take a look at any bill that comes along and review it. That's number one. I did not say your bill was a good one at all. We'll wait and see about that.

Secondly, smart meters will give us a pretty good idea as to whether or not there is a grow op or not. If you want to deal with your issue, then you've got to support us on smart meters, because they will probably be the best indicator as to whether or not a grow op is going on.

Let's be absolutely clear: This government has absolutely zero tolerance when it comes to grow ops. We will deal with that situation collectively, through a number of different ministries. But I would suggest to you that if you really want to do something about the situation, then you've got to adhere and support us in the whole notion of smart meters, because they will give us a good idea as to what's going on.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

People—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Honourable members, I'd like to give the member from Nickel Belt the opportunity to ask a question.

Please continue.

M^{me} France Gélinas: People living with multiple sclerosis have been given some hope with CCSVI, better known as the liberation treatment. This treatment provides hope for people where very little hope existed before.

I acknowledge that the procedure needs to undergo basic research as well as clinical trials before being approved, and I have no intention of circumventing the need for evidence-informed decisions, but people living with MS want to know: Will this government commit to having the necessary funding in place should research

support approving the treatment so there is no delay? People want to have a commitment from this minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I really do welcome the question from the member opposite. This liberation treatment, CCSVI, is obviously providing a glimmer of hope for people with MS, people who up till now haven't had a lot of hope in the treatment of their disease. I have received, as you can imagine, many, many letters and stories that are heartbreaking—they're nothing short of heartbreaking.

I think we owe it to the people with MS to follow this very, very closely. If, in fact, this glimmer of hope turns into something that will help people with MS, we're going to be there for them. I want people with MS to understand we do have to follow the science. I'm very pleased that the member opposite does acknowledge the importance of following the science, following the research. If, in fact, this turns out to be what we all hope it is, then we will be there.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: When the minister says that she will be there for them, does she mean she will do like New Brunswick, Manitoba and Saskatchewan and put money on the table to be ready once this treatment—if this treatment—proves effective? CCSVI treatment needs to be researched, and if the clinical trials warrant funding, then people with MS and their supporters want to have the assurance from this government that, in fact, the Minister of Health will be ready to move immediately to fund the procedure.

Will the minister do like her colleagues in other provinces and commit monies, both for the trials and to ensure that the system is in place so that people living with MS will not have to wait if this procedure is approved?

1120

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think the member opposite understands that we rely very heavily on the evidence here. We do have experts who give us advice on what procedures to fund and what procedures need more research. We will rely on our experts.

What I can tell you is that if in fact this is something that provides relief for people with MS, of course we will fund it. Of course we will be there for the people.

There is now not a great deal of hope for people with MS. It is a progressive disease. If in fact there is help for them, of course we will be there.

EDUCATION

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, I am hearing from constituents in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex about our education system here in Ontario. Parents and grandparents want to know that their children and grandchildren are being well equipped for tomorrow's workforce. Parents want to be engaged in their children's learning and want to work with teachers to achieve learning continuity both at school and at home.

All around the world, education is a top priority for all orders of government. They all recognize that investing in our future generations is the best way to move a society forward. Minister, this government can be proud of its investments in education, which focus on student achievement, but my constituents want to know how our educational system is stacking up against the rest of the world. Is our approach working?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm very happy that the honourable member has brought this forward. What I am able to share with her—and what she can share with her constituents—is that we certainly are cognizant of the importance of education and all of their concerns.

You can tell them that just this week, there was a report released by McKinsey and Co. that cites Ontario's education system as one of the best in the world. So we're very proud, certainly, of our students and the work that goes on in our schools; of our excellent teachers and principals. We have representatives here today from the Ontario Principals' Council.

We know that parents play a huge role in the success of our students. In fact, the McKinsey report did cite our efforts to engage parents through our Parents Reaching Out grant. It has been a particularly good investment.

The investments we've made overall in education are delivering results, so I encourage the honourable member to share this report with her constituents.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Minister, my constituents will certainly be very pleased with this news. We can be proud of how well Ontario is doing on the world stage.

While we're making considerable progress, Minister, I would also like to raise a concern with you that a constituent has brought to my attention. Considering how much we have achieved over our mandate, there is still some concern that we are going to begin to plateau and results will stagnate. What are we doing to ensure that our education system changes with the times to ensure continued student success for the future?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Studies have shown that by investing in our earliest learners, that is the best way to support student success and achievement. We have been doing that, and that is why our government has committed to full-day kindergarten. We believe that making those investments for children before they arrive in school will enable them to be successful when they get there and results will continue to improve.

We are absolutely committed to the implementation of full-day kindergarten. We know this is what parents want. We know the opposition call it a frill. They are not committed to it. They voted against it in this House. We are committed to full-day kindergarten because we know it will support improved student achievement in the province of Ontario.

GROWTH PLANNING

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. Minister, on November 18, you refused to extend the ridiculous deadline of January 31 for re-

sponse to the amendments to the Simcoe growth plan. Last Tuesday, I called for a late show because clearly you didn't understand the question and instead found ways to insult me because I was standing up for my municipalities. Then, for the late show, you sent the parliamentary assistant, who had no idea what he was talking about. For an example, he said, "There were only seven new councillors elected in the whole county...." In fact, Minister, there was a changeover of 50%, with 70 new councillors being elected from across the county of Simcoe.

Now that I have given you the facts, will you extend the deadline dates so that newly elected councillors can be properly educated on a process that will impact their municipalities for the next 20 years?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question. First of all, Simcoe county is part of the greater Golden Horseshoe planning area under the Places to Grow Act, and there are certain very significant principles that are involved in that.

First of all, it's to prevent urban sprawl, to have organized growth, to identify employment areas, to identify where the growth will occur and to identify the green spaces for a particular community. That occurred in Simcoe county.

What happened was, an official plan was prepared by Simcoe county. The plan did not go far enough, so my ministry started a very significant consultation process where we received over 100 submissions over 18 months. The consultation was extremely significant. We are now having another three months of consultation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Again, you never answered the question. I asked for an extension.

Minister, I have received letters from the county of Simcoe, numerous municipalities, trade unions, the construction industry and chambers of commerce which basically call your process a sham. They all wonder why you are trying to move the amendment process through at lightning speed after sitting on it for 18 months. They also question why you are micromanaging the Simcoe growth program and not other municipalities under Places to Grow.

Minister, will you make a deputation, then, at the January meeting of Simcoe county council, explain your reasoning and answer questions to the 15 new mayors and deputy mayors, as other ministers have done in the past under Places to Grow? Or will we have to clean up this mess next fall, next October?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We're very proud of our growth plan in the greater Golden Horseshoe. Two years of extensive consultations on Simcoe's strategy have taken place. We now have a three-month consultation period, which will give new municipal councillors time to review the draft amendment which has been put forward.

Many municipal councillors and officials attended three technical sessions we've already held to help everyone get up to speed on the draft amendment. Two more are scheduled. I also have an open door for any person,

any stakeholder, from the county who wants to come to my office and speak about this issue. We've done it with many, and we'll continue to do so.

The process is responsible. The process is responsive to the people in Simcoe. We intend to move forward with our three-month consultation process before we consider the final draft.

G20 SUMMIT

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Premier: With more disturbing accounts of police brutality during the G20 summit, Chief Blair in denial and the peculiar instance of the SIU reopening their investigation into allegations of excessive force right here on the grounds of this Legislature, with so many troubling questions still unanswered and more arising each day, when will the Premier finally agree that the only way to clear the stench is through a full public inquiry into the events surrounding the G20?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: It was interesting to note that the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, in fact, weighed in on this particular subject. What they said is, "What is needed is a comprehensive review that can examine the decisions and policies of all of the actors involved in the G20. The G20 was a federal summit, hosted by the federal government, policed by a federal security agency and paid for by federal funds. The federal government is therefore best suited to coordinate such an inquiry...."

It would be useful if the member were to speak to his federal colleague in the House of Commons to direct that particular question to the Prime Minister or to whatever minister in the federal government it would be most appropriate to direct it to, but that is the conclusion of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: We're talking about police who are mandated by provincial legislation to perform their duties. We're talking about a Public Inquiries Act that is provincial legislation. We're talking about a situation that is entirely within the jurisdiction of this government, around which to call a public inquiry: excessive force, brutality, illegal arrests by Ontario police officers, blatant disregard of fundamental rights by Ontario police officers, damage done to local businesses. People have serious questions about what happened during the G20 summit, and for that matter, what happened in Premier McGuinty's cabinet when they passed their fake regulation, and these people aren't getting any answers.

The hodgepodge of narrowly focused investigations won't cut it. Why does the Premier continue to ignore the call for a public inquiry by this government in this province and in this city?

1130

Hon. James J. Bradley: I have a great deal of respect for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and their recommendation, but let me inform the member, as I

think he knows, of what inquiries are going on at this time.

First of all, the Toronto Police Services Board announced that it is leading an independent review, with an eminent justice at the head of that review; the Office of the Independent Police Review Director announced that it is conducting a systematic review; the Ontario Ombudsman is conducting an investigation into the specifics of the G20 regulation; and Justice McMurtry will be reviewing the Public Works Protection Act, a World War II-era piece of legislation. Justice McMurtry's review is moving forward in this exercise to determine the best use of this legislation in 2010.

There are several specific reviews of a provincial nature going on at the present time. The member may want to ask his federal—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MEDICAL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. Four decades ago, Dr. James Till and Dr. Ernest McCulloch from the University of Toronto discovered the existence of stem cells. Stem cells can be powerful tools in repairing tissue and fighting illnesses and diseases. Since then, Ontario has been on the leading edge of continued research around stem cells, including the development of viable adult stem cell retrieval, which would be used to enhance the quality of life for Ontario families.

Dr. Janet Rossant, chief researcher at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children, said, "Stem cells have a capacity to copy themselves and to make endless supplies of cells that ... could be used to repair many tissues in diseases like Parkinson's"—which my brother Norm fights—"diabetes ... chronic conditions, and spinal cord injury."

For my brother, for those in my constituency affected by these and other diseases and for all Ontarians, I ask the minister: How is your ministry advancing Ontario as a world leader in stem cell research?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member for his question and assure him that Ontario will continue to lead in stem cell research. It's one of our focal points of a \$3.2-billion commitment to research and innovation.

As he noted, we have a long-standing history of stem cell research, and our discoveries have not only gone national but they've gone global in their impact, with breakthroughs in this important field.

The government is proud of relationships like the one with the Stem Cell Network, made up of over 80 experts drawn from universities and hospitals not just in Ontario but, indeed, across Canada.

In the 2009 budget, we committed \$100 million for genomics and gene-related research focused on discovering new therapies and technologies that will help people live healthier lives. MRI has invested \$32.9 million alone

in projects related to stem cell research and regenerative medicine—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Levac: I know that my brother and my family are grateful for this kind of investment, and I know that all Ontarians with Parkinson's and other debilitating diseases are thankful. Ontario families want to know, though, that investing their tax dollars is being done wisely. Creating benefits through research will make a real difference when it comes to improving the lives of them and their loved ones.

Instead of scaling back research, this government takes the position that research and innovation in the life sciences, clean technologies and digital communications will not only improve the overall quality of life that we have, but also opportunities for new jobs and economic growth, and for that I know Ontarians—all Ontarians—are grateful.

I've heard the minister many times say how this effort can create jobs and support companies that have been working on health technologies and life sciences innovations. This government created Canada's only stand-alone ministry devoted to research and innovation. I want to know from the minister: What research, what actual results are we seeing by investing in science and health research?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Our Premier, in establishing this important ministry, took a very long view, and we're starting to see early results. I'd like to just give you one example.

In 2010, Dr. Mick Bhatia, the scientific director at the McMaster Stem Cell and Cancer Research Institute in the great city of Hamilton, partly funded by our government, published his team's finding on the breakthrough discovery that enables scientists to transform human skin into blood. This is a revolutionary discovery bringing new hope to those suffering from blood-borne cancers: that skin from their own bodies can be used to cure them. This could eliminate the need for rare donor matches or the fear that their bodies may reject transplanted stem cells.

Ontarians are proud of their researchers and doctors, who are now solving problems thought to be impossible only years ago. This work that is being done by Ontario's top researchers is invaluable in creating—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CHICKEN INDUSTRY

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. The Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission is planning to establish an advisory committee for the Chicken Farmers of Ontario marketing board. The goal of this new committee is purportedly to promote good relations in the industry and to advise the Chicken Farmers of Ontario marketing board on issues, yet your ministry is proposing to set up this advisory committee

with no representatives from the Ontario Independent Poultry Processors.

Minister, why are you excluding smaller chicken processors from your new committee to advise on the chicken industry?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I do want to thank the member for the question. I also want to say how proud I am of the industry for how well they have done and the working relationships that they have developed between the producers and the processors.

I can say to the member from across the way that they understood that in order to continue to attract consumers and have them engaged, the products that they produce need to be expanded. I want to say for the record how pleased I am about the work that is happening.

Obviously, when we look at the processing sector, there are many things that have to be taken into consideration. I have met with the producers and I have met with the processors, and they are working very diligently to ensure that the products are available to our consumers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: My riding contains one of the largest independent chicken processing firms in Ontario, employing almost 600 people in the town of Bradford-West Gwillimbury. In such a heavily regulated industry, independent processors need marketing boards and advisory committees that listen to their concerns and allow them a voice. You know as well as I do that once an advisory committee is set up, the board is unlikely to solicit advice from outside, from those independent operators.

Minister, taking away their voice is a bad idea. Will you change this misguided plan and let all chicken producers and processors be represented?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I do want to thank the member for the question, and I do want to question the member on this fact: We've made significant investments in making local food available in Ontario, and the people of Ontario recognize that Ontario food is safe and affordable and high quality, but the member from across the way constantly votes against it; against \$80 million in investment.

We understand that all processors need to have their considerations taken to the table. That's what they're working towards; it is an industry-driven initiative. Local food is a part of that: In order to ensure that we have the maximum retail shelf, that's why we have made significant investments in our local food.

So I say to the member from across the way: Why will they not support our farmers? They recognize that that investment in local food has made a difference in their income, and it's made a—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

On Monday, the minister spoke to the Association of Ontario Health Centres assembled at Queen's Park. The minister spoke glowingly of community health centres: "Community health centres reflect the very best in Ontario's health system." That's pretty good. But in March of this year, when she responded to the French Language Services Commissioner's report, the minister said, "No funding is currently available for a CHC, and there are no plans to open a new CHC." How can the minister explain this contradiction?

1140

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm so happy to have this opportunity to talk about the extraordinarily fine work that is happening in CHCs right across this province. I'm very proud that this is the government that has doubled the number of community health centres across this province. When we are done, we will have almost half a million Ontarians gaining access to community health centres. I am enormously proud of the work that is happening there.

I had the honour of attending, with the Minister of Transportation, at Flemingdon community health centre just yesterday to see the exceptional work they are doing in the South Asian community for the early detection and prevention of diabetes.

Community health centres are doing great work. Our commitment is—well, what can I say? We've doubled the number of community health centres, and I'm extremely proud of the work that they are doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The announcements made in 2005 are finally rolling out, but what we're talking about is the minister—nice words she says again. Community health centres are so much more than just health care. They build community health and meet so many needs.

AOHC released their report addressing the great health divide and have documented the evidence supporting the need to expand access to community health centres and AHACs. How can the minister, on the one hand, praise community health centres and, on the other hand, say, "No more"?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I really think the member opposite needs to actually listen to what I said. We have doubled the number of community health centres. We believe in the model of community health centres. We are doing the work on the ground to roll out all of the community health centres we have committed to.

I cannot speak to future commitments, because we have a process on this side that we go through.

Look at our record. We have nothing but respect for the work done in community health centres. They are exceptional primary health care providers. My support for them is unequivocal. And yes, of course, I look forward to doing more.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like to correct the name of the organization. It was not ISAC, even though I thank them, but it's SARAC, chaired by Gail Nyberg.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity today to welcome some guests from my riding seated in the Speaker's gallery. A good friend of mine, Annie Robert, has brought with her to visit Queen's Park today my good friend and neighbour Richard Sitzes and Frank Skonieczny. Frank is the ultimate paper shredder, who works in my constituency office once a week. Great job, Frank. Welcome, all of you, to Queen's Park today.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the member from government services for his comments.

GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Dufferin–Caledon, Ms. Jones, has provided me with notice of her intention to raise a point of privilege. I want to advise that I will be ruling on this matter without hearing further directly from the member, as standing order 21(d) permits me to do.

The member raises with me the same issue that has already been raised several other times in the recent past; namely, the matter of government announcements being made outside the chamber. Specifically, the member refers to yesterday's announcement by the Minister of Community and Social Services concerning the formation of a Social Assistance Review Committee.

As has been ruled on numerous occasions, the Speaker has no jurisdiction over announcements that are made in other places, nor can he compel the announcements to be made only in the chamber.

While I appreciate that the member does feel aggrieved that the announcement she refers to was made outside this House, and Speakers have certainly expressed the consistent view that important announcements should first be made to the Legislative Assembly, what she has brought forward does not raise a *prima facie* case of privilege.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the motion by Mr. Gravelle for allocation of time on Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1145 to 1150.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members please take their seats.

On November 30, Mr. Gravelle moved government notice of motion number 51. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes
Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Broten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dombrowsky, Leona
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoskins, Eric
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Matthews, Deborah
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Mordi, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Haninder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Chudleigh, Ted
Elliott, Christine
Gélinas, France
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim
Jones, Sylvia
Kormos, Peter
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Savoline, Joyce
Shurman, Peter
Tabuns, Peter
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 52; the nays are 24.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1153 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WORLD AIDS DAY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the PC caucus to pay tribute to the 22nd annual World AIDS Day. Thirty-three million people worldwide are living with HIV today, and two million of those are children.

The first cases of HIV/AIDS in North America were medically recognized nearly 30 years ago, and while there has been commendable progress, there is still no cure.

In Canada, over 50% of grade 9 students wrongly believe that there is a cure for AIDS, and 8% of Canadians believe that they could not be friends with someone who has HIV/AIDS.

Awareness campaigns like the Canadian Foundation for AIDS Research's red ribbon campaign work to dispel these kinds of myths among young people and among Canadians in general.

Another important aspect that Canfar excels in is obtaining funding for AIDS research. Thanks to Canfar-

funded research, the risk of transmitting HIV between a mother and her baby has been almost completely eliminated. A critical component of the AIDS drug cocktail has been found, which keeps many alive today, often into their 70s. And thanks to new CANFAR-funded research, just this year an HIV vaccine candidate has been discovered that is able to reduce and in some cases prevent HIV progression.

I would like to thank all of the dedicated professionals and volunteers involved in the work toward eradicating HIV/AIDS today.

RAIL SERVICE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am pleased to rise in the House this afternoon to share with my colleagues and constituents of York South-Weston that earlier today I tabled a private member's motion calling for electrification to be embraced as an environmentally safe means of powering commuter trains.

The resolution supports and reflects the concerns of communities living along the Georgetown transit corridor, including those of Weston and Mount Dennis, located in York South-Weston, worried about pollution from the expanded rail service planned to start in 2015.

My resolution seeks, in particular, for this corridor to be made a priority for the electrification of commuter trains, as there are a number of high-density neighbourhoods along it.

It's important for me to acknowledge the advocacy and active support of the member for Davenport on this issue. I look forward to working very closely with him.

I urge my colleagues from all sides of the House to support this motion when it is debated. This will help address the concerns of the different communities that live along the Georgetown rail corridor.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Last week, over 800 farmers gathered in Stratford at the Farmers Matter town hall to talk about the challenges that Ontario farmers are facing. I want to commend the organizers for putting together this important event.

Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak and I met with the organizers last Thursday. They were pleased at the response to the event, but raised concerns about the delay from the government on a cost-of-production business risk management program.

I want to commend the farmers who came out to the town hall and offered constructive ideas, as well as those who shared the challenges of dealing with a high dollar, long-term low market prices and high input costs.

There were a number of important questions from the audience, including: What is the solution to food labelling? Where was the Minister of Agriculture? Why won't the provincial government fund their share of the cost-of-production program now?

We heard clearly that the current risk management programs aren't working and they believe a cost-of-production-based program is part of the solution. The PC caucus agrees.

Farmers aren't asking for a bailout. They're asking for a predictable, bankable program that is in place for more than a year at a time.

As a young farmer, Stewart Skinner, said, "Give me the tools that put me on a level playing field with both my provincial counterparts and my international competitors, and I promise we'll thrive."

I hope the organizers hold more events like this. I assure them that the PC caucus is looking forward to their input, because we understand farmers matter.

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

Mr. Paul Miller: It's the time of year when we reflect on how things went over the past 11 months and how we can improve the lives of our constituents, families and friends.

I've been quite disappointed in the way this government has handled many files and, in particular, the protection of fragile, vulnerable seniors in retirement homes whose safety has not been improved.

But through all of the heated debate, the government's abuse of democracy by its use of procedures and its majority to stifle opposition bills, motions and good works for their constituents, there have been two constant and extremely professional groups in this Legislature.

I refer to our Legislative Assembly staff. We have the best Clerk's staff, and that includes her many departments, both here at the Legislature and in Whitney Block. Equally, we have the best security staff, including the Sergeant-at-Arms and his many departments at the Legislature, Whitney, and those who face the elements in their outside work sites every day.

I want to take this opportunity to extend to them my sincere thanks. Without your advice and support, we would not have the best, most professional operations that make our daily work so much easier.

Thank you, and my best wishes for the holiday season and the coming new year.

ST. MATTHEW CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Phil McNeely: Last Friday, I had the pleasure of going on a tour of the new "right size" addition at St. Matthew Catholic High School in Orléans.

My host was school principal Christopher Mes, who was understandably excited about the opportunities the addition provides to both staff and students.

The funds to build the new addition were part of an initiative to help save taxpayers' dollars by making our schools more energy-efficient. The green energy retrofit program was unveiled in April 2009, and while the main focus of the program was to make plant improvements at individual schools, there was an allowance to replace

older, highly inefficient portable classrooms with new school additions.

This was the case at St. Matthew high school, which was using nine portables to help house students just a year ago. Thanks to the efforts of parents like Mike Buzzetti and former school board trustee Stephen Blais, we were able to work with the staff of the Ministry of Education to get the necessary funding to build the five-room addition.

During my tour, I was able to visit the school's new fitness room, which provides students who might not otherwise have access to fitness equipment with a place to exercise, and several classrooms, including one equipped with a new smartboard.

Thanks to our government's efforts, students at St. Matthew no longer have to go to class in aging, drafty portables. They can now look forward to studying with the rest of the school population in brightly lit classrooms where they are taught by a dedicated team of teachers.

It was indeed a pleasure to see and hear the level of enthusiasm and dedication that exist at St. Matthew high school. It is incumbent on us to give educators the facilities to make it easier for them to create the atmosphere of excellence in all our schools.

TIGER JEET SINGH FOUNDATION

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm pleased to talk about the Tiger Jeet Singh Foundation, which was created to raise awareness and funding where it is desperately needed as a result of government funding shortfalls in hospitals and public schools.

Together with Troy Newton, owner of Troy's Diner in Milton, the foundation hosted a toy drive in 2009 where over 1,200 people came together and raised over \$30,000 worth of toys for children. To the delight of many children, donations were delivered to Halton's Women's Place, Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children, Milton hospital and the Milton Salvation Army.

Together over the last year, Troy Newton and the Tiger Jeet Singh Foundation have raised over \$110,000 for local charities, and they're back at it again. In the spirit of giving, I'll be joining Troy's Diner and the Tiger Jeet Singh Foundation, who are hosting the 2010 toy drive on December 20. Donations will go to brighten the homes of families through the Salvation Army, Halton's Women's Place, Milton hospital and the Hospital for Sick Children.

For their continued generosity and dedication to the families and children of Halton, I would like to thank Troy Newton and Tiger Jeet Singh, and encourage people to donate to this worthy fundraising event to make a positive difference in the lives of Ontario families at a time of year when giving is a hallmark of the season.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Bill Mauro: Last week, AbitibiBowater announced that as part of the restructuring process, it has entered into agreements with the governments of both

Quebec and Ontario with regard to the company's pension obligations. This request to help them exit bankruptcy protection has the support of the union, the workers and the company. This agreement will become effective if and when AbiBow fully emerges from creditor protection, and that seems more likely every day.

There's been a tremendous amount of good economic news in Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario. Recent announcements have meant hundreds of jobs at Bombardier, roughly 200 jobs at the Lac des Iles mine and around 340 jobs at Terrace Bay Pulp. There's also the conversion of the two coal plants in my riding, which is expected to result in hundreds of construction jobs in addition to all the jobs that will be saved by keeping the plants in operation. And the list goes on.

Now with the news from AbiBow, we see hope and excitement at another major employer in Thunder Bay. It is very possible that the company, should it fully exit creditor protection, will go forward with a \$50-million condensing turbine project.

Many will remember that at AbiBow in Fort Frances, our government provided a \$22-million grant for a cogen there. Our government remains committed to helping with a similar initiative in Thunder Bay. Not only could this create another major construction project for northwestern Ontario, but it would also represent a long-term commitment to AbiBow's operation in Thunder Bay and its roughly 450 employees.

This project could make the mill more energy efficient and allow them to sell excess power back to the grid, and along with our government's energy relief for large industrials in northern Ontario, make AbiBow's Thunder Bay operations extremely competitive for years to come.

1510

ROMANIA

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: On December 1, 1918, a momentous occasion took place in the history of Romania: The establishment of the Republic of Romania by uniting Transylvania, Bessarabia and Bukovina. On December 1, Romanians all over the world celebrate this independence of the great union of 1918, when, by freely expressing their will, Romanians from all historical provinces previously under foreign domination proclaimed their union with the motherland, thus accomplishing the centuries-long dream of their ancestors of creating the great Romania.

The First World War finds Romania on the Allied side, the Second World War on the Axis side. In 1948, Romania falls under Soviet hegemony and becomes communist.

I had the chance to meet the last communist president, Mr. Ceausescu, in 1987 at the industrial fair in Bucharest. While uniting the Barzan family and Nicolescu families on humanitarian grounds with my mother who, as you know, speaks Romanian fluently and speaks seven other languages, I experienced firsthand the suffering and pain that Mr. Ceausescu's economic reforms caused. I'll provide details to my friends some other time.

Today, Romanians are able to dream again. They are part of the united Europe and also part of NATO. This membership represents the aspirations of the Romanian people to look west to democracy, to liberty and to freedom.

Representing the government today as we raised the flag outside were the Consul General and a number of representatives.

To the Romanian people we say today congratulations on this special unity day.

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr. Rick Johnson: Two weeks ago, my honourable colleague Ted McMeekin rose in the House to share the startling fact that one in six men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetime. For the 24,600 Canadian men who will be diagnosed with prostate cancer this year alone, I'm pleased to rise today to share another startling fact: Over \$19.3 million has been raised across Canada during this year's Movember campaign.

Now, November is certainly not the longest month of the year, but try convincing my family of that. While I'm sure, deep inside, my wife and kids saw my moustache as a sort of ribbon for men's health, I know they've been waiting for today.

Though I hoped my "mo" would afford me the intelligence of Albert Einstein, the strength of Hulk Hogan, the allure of Tom Selleck, the wit of Charlie Chaplin and the omnipotence of Steve Peters, it didn't. But it did impress upon me and everyone I spoke with the importance of understanding the symptoms and undergoing the risk assessments for prostate cancer.

As the number one cancer affecting men my age, this is something we need to be mindful of. Thanks to this year's over 118,000 Movember campaign registrants, Canadians continue to change the face of men's health. Men of all ages are listening and taking positive action with their own health, diet, exercise and lifestyle, and the funds raised for Prostate Cancer Canada will support further vital research and services for survivors.

For the past month, every time I put my face forward I helped thousands of other Canadians spread the message and today my "mo" will go. I'd like to again remind all men over 40 to please talk to their doctors about a prostate examination.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order: I'm advised that this afternoon the government will be calling Bill 122, which is a time-allocated bill, for third reading, which will be dealt with in relatively short order. I'm advised that it will then be calling Bill 172, the Ticket Speculation Act amendments. Bill 172 is in committee this afternoon, was dealt with by a committee, was sent back to the House for third reading and if it is called for third reading this afternoon it will not have been reprinted.

Now, it's clear that the time allocation motion, the order that flowed, permits the bill to be called this afternoon. But it remains that people will be forced to debate that bill as amended—because it was amended in committee—without having a copy of the bill as amended.

Now, I'm not disputing that the bill can be called. What I'm saying to you is that we need the assistance of the Speaker to ensure that members have the bill as amended, perhaps not in the third reading version but certainly as close to that as possible. What I'm suggesting that consists of is, the bill plus the amendment that was made this afternoon.

So I need your help. I'm bringing this point of order now rather than when the bill is called, so that the government has time to prepare that document and distribute it to members of the assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to thank the honourable member for his point of order.

I would just like to inform all members who may be participating in that debate this afternoon that copies of that bill are available at the table, as well as copies of the amendments to that bill that have been made. They are there for all members.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act / Projet de loi 172, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le trafic des billets de spectacle.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 17, 2010, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Hoy: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 120, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010 / Projet de loi 120, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de

retraite et la Loi de 2010 modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 3, 2010, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHRISTOPHER'S AMENDMENT ACT (SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY), 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI CHRISTOPHER SUR LE REGISTRE DES DÉLINQUANTS SEXUELS

Mr. Martiniuk moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 142, An Act to protect our children from sexual predators by amending Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 / Projet de loi 142, Loi visant à protéger nos enfants des prédateurs sexuels en modifiant la Loi Christopher de 2000 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: This bill does two things. Firstly, it amends Christopher's Law so that a sex offender registry will cover a person who, to the knowledge of the ministry under the act is a resident of Ontario and who is an offender with respect to a sex offence in a jurisdiction outside of Canada, if the minister considers the offence equivalent to a sex offence in Canada and if the regulations made under the act prescribe the jurisdiction.

Secondly, subject to the limitations prescribed by regulations, any person, not just an employee of a police force or the ministry, as at present, is entitled at no charge to inspect the sex offender registry and to make copies of any part of the registry.

PROPERTY TAX DEFERRAL ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE REPORT DES IMPÔTS FONCIERS

Mr. Shurman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 143, An Act to provide property tax deferrals to low-income seniors and low-income persons with

disabilities / Projet de loi 143, Loi visant à accorder des reports d'impôts fonciers aux personnes âgées à faible revenu et aux personnes à faible revenu atteintes d'une invalidité.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

1520

Mr. Peter Shurman: This is an updated version of a bill that was debated and lost back in 2008, which sought to provide some relief to fixed income seniors and people on Ontario disability who were having problems meeting their commitments, particularly commitments with regard to property tax.

This is a way to allow people across the province equitable and equal access to a deferral opportunity at no cost whatsoever to the cities where they live or to the province of Ontario. I look forward to debating it.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HANUKKAH

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It's my pleasure to rise in the Legislature today to offer my best wishes to Ontario's Jewish community on the occasion of Hanukkah, the festival of lights. The tradition of Hanukkah originated with the rededication of the holy temple in Jerusalem after its desecration.

As the story of Hanukkah goes, there was only enough consecrated olive oil to fuel the flame of the menorah in the holy temple for one day. Miraculously, the flame burned for eight days. In a testament to this miracle, the candles of the hanukkiah are lit, beginning with one and adding another each night until all eight candles are lit.

The story of Hanukkah symbolizes spirit and strength, faith and hope—all core traits of the Jewish people throughout the ages. These are powerful traits which have endured for millennia and continue to endure today.

Ontario is fortunate to benefit from a vibrant Jewish community, and for generations, Ontario's Jewish community has made its mark in every field, in every endeavour and in every facet of this province. Their contributions have helped us build a stronger, more prosperous and more vibrant Ontario.

Today, on the first day of the festival of lights, the achievements of Ontario's Jewish community shine brighter than ever. The brightly burning flames are a powerful symbol. They light the way. They are a beacon of hope and inspiration.

Similarly, that is what diversity means to Ontario: the bringing together of different religions, different races and different ethnicities in our great province to enrich all of us, socially, culturally and economically. We live as

one people, as Ontarians in the best province in the greatest country in the world, and we serve as a model in the way our diverse and dynamic communities contribute to our common well-being and also in how we celebrate each other's traditions.

In that spirit, I hope that my colleagues and all Ontarians will join me in wishing our Jewish friends a very happy Hanukkah and Chag Sameach. As Jewish Ontarians light the first Hanukkah light tonight, I hope that they are filled with great joy and blessings this holiday season.

Mr. Peter Shurman: We celebrate Hanukkah, the festival of lights, for eight days commencing on the eve of the 25th day of Kislev, which this year coincides with today, December 1, 2010. Hanukkah, the holiday or festival of lights, is a holiday that celebrates freedom, something that we can all relate to.

Coming in the dead of winter, Hanukkah celebrates the triumph of light over darkness, of purity over contamination, of spirituality over materialism. Hanukkah talks about freedom and a commemoration of a miracle that occurred during the time of the Maccabees. After Alexander the Great took Jerusalem, he endeared himself to the Jewish people by respecting their religion—something, sadly, that many people over the course of history have not done, and I might add, still don't do in too many cases.

The miracle of Hanukkah, the festival of lights, is commemorated with an eight-candle plus one menorah, hanukkiah or candelabra. The one elevated candle, or shamash, is kindled daily and is used to light the other candles, one additional per day for all eight days.

What is the significance of the eight days? It is the same amount of time the holy temple's miraculous menorah burned in Jerusalem over 2,100 years ago, using an amount of oil nowhere near sufficient for such a time span. On each night, Jewish families gather together to say the blessings over the hanukkiah and to share prayer, which is sung. The blessings are sung in unison and well do I remember this nightly ritual when my two then young boys and I and my wife and our family dog Rocky felt compelled to lend to our voices in unison singing the blessings. Rocky was quite a singer.

On the first night of Hanukkah two candles are lit, the shamash plus one; on the second night three, and so on.

Hanukkah customs also include eating foods fried in oil—not diet-conscious, perhaps, but commemorative of the miracle. Foods like potato latkes or pancakes and jelly doughnuts are prime menu items. We have all heard about children playing with a dreidel, or as most know it, a top. This is another Hanukkah custom, fun for kids, which involves minor gambling for nuts and pennies.

During the holiday, adults are reminded and children learn about the scriptures and stories of their ancestors and presents are exchanged. This exchange is to share the memory of the gift given to the Jewish people by God through his zealous servants the Maccabees: the gifts of religious, cultural and political freedom.

Hanukkah is therefore a holiday that has great relevance for all Canadians, living as we do in a land that is likewise very blessed with such gifts. Our job is to illuminate. How better to illuminate the world than through the festival of lights.

At this time of year, Jews the world over give thanks for what we have and what we hope and expect as the future unfolds. Happy Hanukkah to us all.

Mr. Michael Prue: It is my honour to speak about Hanukkah today. I have known about Hanukkah indirectly since I was a boy growing up in Regent Park and in the area of Cabbagetown. It was a place of many cultures and of many religions and you grew up learning a lot of things about people's cultures and their beliefs. My friends who were Jewish celebrated Hanukkah and taught me a lot about their religion and their beliefs and the things that they held very dear.

It was not until I had the opportunity to go to university, though, that I discovered the true meaning of Hanukkah and some of the history around it. Growing up with a copy of the King James Bible, I was totally unfamiliar with those sections, First and Second Maccabees, which in the Douay-Rheims or Catholic Bible one would ordinarily find and read.

They were fascinating to me as they outlined the ancient history of the struggle of the Maccabees to take back the temple of Jerusalem and to free the citizens of Israel. As a student of ancient history, it was one of the places I went often to read the minute detail of what occurred in the second century BC.

In fact, the Maccabees today are renowned and are known universally as the first guerrilla fighters because they were the ones who knew the land. They knew the terrain and the people and who lived there and they were able to hide during the day amongst their people so that they could not be found by the soldiers of Antiochus IV, who was intent upon Hellenizing all of the Middle East. So it is to the Maccabees that we look today when you see a freedom movement. You see, they are held in high esteem for the lessons they taught us all.

The story is well-known, the miracle of Hanukkah and the eight-flamed lamp, but I want to say a few words about my own community in Beaches—East York. There is a very small synagogue in the Beach. It's a very small synagogue but a very great one, and it has been there for many, many years unbeknownst to most people. In fact, there is a gentleman named Arie Nerman who was not an observant Jew and who came from Winnipeg.

He settled in the Beach and one day a person asked him whether or not he had been to the synagogue. He scoffed at them and said, "What synagogue?" He was totally unaware that there had been a synagogue in the Beach since the 1940s. He went on to discover that it was there, that there were not enough men; I believe it requires 10 or 12 to actually hold the ceremony. He single-handedly went about organizing to have those people present and today it is a vibrant little synagogue.

I know that today at the start of Hanukkah and over the next eight nights, Arie Nerman and a very small but

dedicated group of Jewish citizens will be there to celebrate Hanukkah. They will be blessing the candles, they will be doing the Hallel of praise and gratitude, they will be singing hymns in Hebrew—and I'm sure in English, because they do that as well. I want to congratulate them and all of the 180,000 Jewish citizens of Ontario at this time of Hanukkah.

1530

I also want to thank those people from my boyhood who gave me wonderful memories of things that my friend from Thornhill has already talked about: of dreidels, those marvellous little tops; of latkes and jelly doughnuts; of gelt, and understanding for the first time in my life what gelt was—it was money, or chocolate made up to look like money—and it is still a word that is often used in vocabulary here in Ontario.

We have a great history and a great melting pot here in Ontario of people of all cultures. I am particularly proud of the 180,000 citizens who are Jewish, who are of the Jewish faith here in Ontario for the remarkable and long-lasting contribution they have made to all of us in this wonderful place we call Ontario. Happy Hanukkah.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Niagara Health System's (NHS) closure of the ERs in Port Colborne and in Fort Erie has led to increases of wait times of more than 18 hours for complex care in the ERs of Niagara Falls, St. Catharines and Welland;

"Whereas the closure of the two ERs has led to an increase in travel time to the remaining ERs, thus endangering the lives of patients in need of critical care. Two people so far have died in the ambulance en route to the Welland hospital from Fort Erie and Port Colborne;

"Whereas the Niagara Health System increased the taxpayers' burden to pay for additional ambulances and paramedics without first consulting municipalities and the public;

"Whereas the Niagara Health System, by greatly reducing the number of beds available in all of its hospitals, created a serious bed shortage resulting in the cancellation of surgeries and patients waiting in the ER for days before being transferred for appropriate care;

"Whereas the Niagara Health System, by drastically reducing the number of nurses, medical professionals and support staff, has created a situation where due to a lack of staffing surgeries are cancelled, wait times in the ERs have increased, ambulance gridlock is the norm, and housekeeping and maintenance of hospitals have deteriorated;

"Whereas the Niagara Health System has reduced and cut hospital services in many municipalities, thereby

denying equal access to hospital care for over 50,000 people in Fort Erie, Port Colborne and Welland. Higher transportation costs for ambulance and patient transfer have created an unfair barrier to health care for those residents;

"Whereas the Niagara Health System, by continuing to implement its restructuring plan (hospital improvement plan) without first evaluating its impact to date on patient care and access to hospitals, will make further cuts to hospital services and beds in Niagara Falls, St. Catharines and Welland and adversely affect over 300,000 residents;

"We, the undersigned, urge the Legislative Assembly of Ontario under the provisions of the Public Hospitals Act to send an independent investigator to investigate the Niagara Health System and to act quickly on his/her recommendations in order to improve the quality of management, patient care and access to hospital services throughout the region and to meet all of Niagara's communities' growing health care needs, and to ensure that there is a substantive improvement in the quality and accessibility to health care in the Niagara region."

This petition is signed by approximately 7,000 people. It's certified by the Clerk, pursuant to the standing orders, and I have affixed my signature and endorse its proposal.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's a new record, over two and a half minutes.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a petition addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of Government Services. It reads as follows:

"Whereas identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America;

"Whereas confidential and private information is being stolen on a regular basis, affecting literally thousands of people;

"Whereas the cost of this crime exceeds billions of dollars;

"Whereas countless hours are wasted to restore one's good credit rating;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that Bill 38, which passed the second reading unanimously in the Ontario Legislature ... be brought before committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

"(1) All consumer reports should be provided in a truncated (masked-out) form, protecting our vital private information, such as SIN and loan account numbers.

"(2) Should a consumer reporting agency discover that there has been an unlawful disclosure of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the affected consumer.

"(3) The consumer reporting agency shall only report credit-inquiry records resulting from actual applications for credit or increase of credit, except in a report given to the consumer.

"(4) The consumer reporting agency shall investigate disputed information within 30 days and correct, supplement or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed, incomplete or inaccurate."

Mr. Speaker, I am so happy with this petition that I'm signing it right now and sending it to you.

POWER PLANT

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has cancelled the Oakville peaker plant, citing a decrease in need for power in that community, proposing to meet needs by better transmission, and despite the fact that the government may face a \$1-billion lawsuit due to the cancellation;

"Whereas the King township peaker plant is going forward, with the Ontario government having shut off debate about the plan at the OMB through regulation, after failing to provide a proper environmental assessment or community consultation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To give the King township peaker plant and the local community the same consideration as residents of Oakville, and to decide on the future of the peaker plant on a non-partisan basis."

I've affixed my signature.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning, a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, "insured PET scans" have been performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the" residents of the northeast.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Kyle to bring it to the Clerk.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Dave Levac: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Historical Society, founded in 1888, is a not-for-profit corporation, incorporated by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario April 1, 1899, with a mandate to identify, protect, preserve and promote Ontario's history; and

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario's greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

"Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development."

I sign my name, as I agree with this petition, and hand it over to Gabriella.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey has introduced a significant tax credit for farmers who donate agricultural goods to food banks, to help provide tax relief to farmers and assist local food banks; and

"Whereas stagnating economic growth and increasing unemployment over the last two years have strained the ability of food banks to support Ontario's most vulnerable citizens; and

"Whereas over 25 million pounds of fresh produce is disposed of or plowed back into Ontario's fields each year while local food banks," go wanting; and

"Whereas PC MPP Bob Bailey's 'A Bill to Fight Hunger with Local Food' provides an inexpensive and common-sense solution to a critical problem for Ontario's most vulnerable;

1540

"Whereas if the McGuinty Liberals truly support a healthy Ontario and wish to fight poverty, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should immediately pass MPP Bob Bailey's bill;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call MPP Bob Bailey's private member's bill, Bill 78, the Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers), 2010, to committee immediately for consideration and then on to third reading and implementation without delay."

I agree with this petition, and I'll send it down with Drew.

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows, and I think it sets a record:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST)."

I'm in agreement, will put my signature thereto and send it down with William.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Dave Levac: I found another petition that I'm sure you'll agree with regarding cemeteries, and I have a member from the United Empire Loyalists and Six Nations who agrees with it and has signed his name.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas members of the Ontario Genealogical Society are concerned about protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries in their original locations; and

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario's greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

"Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development."

I agree with this petition, sign it and hand it over to Kyle, our page.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm going to need the services of the Sergeant-at-Arms. I believe there may be a stranger in the House. There's somebody sitting in the seat of the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, and it doesn't look like the member who was in the chamber a few moments ago. He seems to be missing his moustache.

Mr. Rick Johnson: On a point of order, I want to thank Frank Filice, barber extraordinaire downstairs, for bringing me back to normal.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Cambridge Memorial Hospital and other hospitals in the Waterloo region are experiencing substantial increased demands due to population growth; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's freeze on new long-term-care facilities has resulted in additional long-term-care patients in our hospitals; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's cuts to hospital funding have resulted in a dangerous environment for patients and staff in Cambridge and across Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That the McGuinty government meet its obligations to introduce a population-needs-based funding formula for hospitals, as has been done in other Canadian provinces."

As I agree with the petition, I affix my name thereto.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of my riding of Nickel Belt.

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, and I will ask Connor to bring it to the Clerk.

Applause.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you to my colleague from Brant for the clapping.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas soaring hydro costs across the province are making electricity unaffordable for many hard-working Ontario families and seniors;

"Whereas energy experts suggest that over the course of 2010, residential hydro bills in Ontario will increase 26% or more, costing a minimum of \$300 for the average homeowner;

"Whereas, over the last year alone, the McGuinty Liberal government added \$150 minimum to hydro generation premiums, \$50 in smart meter fees and then placed \$98 in harmonized sales taxes on the average Ontario hydro household bill;

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's smart meters are forcing hard-working and busy Ontarians to pay exorbitant premiums to do regular chores, such as laundry, outside of the Premier's 'preferred' time-of-use energy schedule;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the McGuinty Liberal government immediately reduce hydro rates for all Ontarians, cease with the time-of-use pricing and remove the HST tax placed upon electricity, as it is an essential service."

I agree with this, affix my signature and send it down with Emily.

TAXATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Burlington.

"Whereas Ontario has lost 171,000 jobs since October and over 300,000 manufacturing and resource sector jobs since 2004; and

"Whereas many families are facing the threat of layoffs or reduced hours; and

"Whereas, rather than introducing a plan to sustain jobs and put Ontario's economy back on track, Dalton McGuinty and his government chose to slap an 8% tax on everyday purchases while giving profitable corporations a \$2-billion income tax cut;

"Be it resolved that the undersigned call on the Legislature to cancel the scheduled implementation of sales tax harmonization."

A little bit tardy, but nonetheless very effective. I support this petition and will ask Elizabeth to bring it to the Clerk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HELPING ONTARIO FAMILIES AND MANAGING RESPONSIBLY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'AIDE AUX FAMILLES ONTARIENNES ET LA GESTION RESPONSABLE

Resuming the debated adjourned on November 29, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters / Projet de loi 135, Loi concernant les mesures financières et budgétaires et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 1, 2010, I'm now required to put the question.

On November 24, 2010, Mr. Phillips moved second reading of Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters.

Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1547 to 1552.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members, please take their seats.

Mr. Phillips has moved second reading of Bill 135. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Gélinas, France
Albanese, Laura	Gravelle, Michael
Arthurs, Wayne	Hampton, Howard
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoskins, Eric
Bentley, Christopher	Hoy, Pat
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena
Bradley, James J.	Johnson, Rick
Brown, Michael A.	Kormos, Peter
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kular, Kuldip
Carroll, Aileen	Kwinter, Monte
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff
Crozier, Bruce	Levac, Dave
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill
Dombrowsky, Leona	McGuinity, Dalton
Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil
Duncan, Dwight	Milloy, John
Garretsen, John	Mitchell, Carol
	Moridi, Reza
	Murray, Glen R.
	Naqvi, Yasir
	Oraziotti, David
	Pendergast, Leeanna
	Phillips, Gerry
	Pupatello, Sandra
	Ramsay, David
	Ruprecht, Tony
	Sandals, Liz
	Sergio, Mario
	Smith, Monique
	Sorbara, Greg
	Sousa, Charles
	Van Bommel, Maria
	Wilkinson, John
	Wynne, Kathleen O.
	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie
Bailey, Robert	Hillier, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Miller, Norm
Chudleigh, Ted	Munro, Julia
	Savoline, Joyce
	Shurman, Peter
	Witmer, Elizabeth

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 54; the nays are 11.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 1, 2010, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR
ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 SUR
LA RESPONSABILISATION
DU SECTEUR PARAPUBLIC

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 30, 2010, on the motion for third reading of Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à accroître la responsabilisation financière des organismes du secteur parapublic.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm going to pick up where my friend the member from Nepean–Carleton left off yesterday afternoon because of the clock expiring; she can't be with us today. I would like to add some things to the record on her behalf as well as speak on my own behalf to Bill 122, which is a bill about accountability. I find

this rather interesting because Liberal accountability strikes me as a bit of an oxymoron.

However, I'm not pleased about, nor should the people of Ontario be pleased about, the fact that Bill 122, an accountability bill, indeed does not go far enough. This bill was really nothing more than a response to what we call eHealth 2.0, the second scandal pertaining to that particular organization.

Very particularly, what I wanted to put on record on behalf of the member for Nepean–Carleton was the fact that she had introduced Bill 39, the Truth in Government Act, on May 6, 2010. If that bill had been adopted, a lot of the problems that the Auditor General recently raised would have been avoided. At the time, the PC caucus sought all-party support for Bill 39 because we believed that it was a sensible plan that could be done and enacted at really no cost, effectively and immediately.

In overview, the provisions of that bill which addressed what the Liberals purport to address in Bill 122 were:

—to expand Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act provisions to apply to all public bodies, not to a select few but to all public bodies;

—full proactive disclosure of contracts over \$10,000 in value, again to apply to all public bodies;

—full proactive disclosure of all travel and hospitality expenses to apply to all public bodies—do you see the repetition in that? All public bodies, not some public bodies, not the public bodies that are represented by Bill 122, but all public bodies;

—full proactive disclosure of all position reclassifications to apply to all public bodies;

—full proactive disclosure of all grant and contribution awards over \$10,000 to apply to all public bodies.

It's repetitive, but it closes the gap. It fills in all of the cracks. It doesn't allow anything to fall through. If this august chamber had decided to support my colleague, we wouldn't be here debating half measures under Bill 122 now.

After major scandals like those at eHealth, Cancer Care Ontario, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., and the most recent scandal where hospital dollars that were intended for front-line patient care have been used on Liberal lobbyists, this government finally decided to take action using Bill 122 as the medium. But Bill 122 stops well short of what the PC caucus would have enacted with the Truth in Government Act, and it does not go far enough to protect tax dollars, to watch those tax dollars carefully and not allow to happen what has happened repeatedly under the watch of the McGuinty government.

1600

This bill only opens hospitals to freedom of information, not all provincial public bodies; this bill only requires expenses to be disclosed at hospitals and LHINs, not all provincial public bodies; and this bill only requires reporting on consultants and not all contracts for goods and services at all provincial public bodies. These so-called reforms are only now being implemented because the Auditor General has yet again exposed this

Liberal government for what it is: an unaccountable, out-of-touch and ill-advised government.

This is reactionary rather than preventative. That's the whole issue surrounding Bill 122 and so much legislation that's put forward by the McGuinty Liberals: It is reactionary and not preventative. And if you don't want to have to stick your fingers in the cracks to keep things from leaking, you don't have to do reactive things. You can be preventive, take the guesswork out of it and create an ability to stop things from happening before they do. If this Liberal government truly believed in protecting tax dollars, they would have supported the amendments the PC caucus brought forward at committee to Bill 122, but as is their custom, they did not.

It's a real shame that after all the Liberal scandals, this government refuses to operate in anything resembling a transparent manner. Scandal after scandal after scandal, the lack of accountability when spending taxpayers' money knows no bounds with this government. You don't have to take my word for it; you can look at the Liberal eHealth boondoggle, by way of example. Then we had eHealth 2.0. Now, most recently, we hear that a Niagara Parks commissioner spent—are you ready?—\$400,000 on flights, high-end hotels, a nightclub and pricey restaurants—\$400,000. I wonder when the last time was that a hard-working Ontario family was able to stay at a pricey hotel, much less \$400,000, under the Dalton McGuinty government.

Hard-working, law-abiding Ontario moms and dads have been terrified by this government, terrified to the point where surveys show that over 50% of all people in Ontario who have jobs fear losing them. That's what you've done.

The lack of accountability for taxpayers' hard-earned dollars is shameful, but never fear, Bill 122 is here. If the McGuinty Liberals introduce a bill about accountability, well then, the McGuinty Liberals must therefore be accountable. That's the way it works around here. It's kind of like reading news in the Toronto Star: If the Toronto Star says it, it must be true. So if you introduce a bill called an accountability bill or anything resembling that, my goodness, you must be accountable. Isn't that true? You're not nodding. I'm surprised.

We're still waiting for the promised disclosure of expense records at 22 large, significant provincial agencies—22. We were promised these documents more than a year after the government said the records would be made public. How is this delay considered accountable in any way to taxpayers?

Interjection: Unbelievable.

Mr. Peter Shurman: My friend says it's unbelievable. It is quite unbelievable. We on this side know where that information is. It's being held as long as it is feasible, as long as it is possible, just like every other piece of information that has been looked for, sought after, by freedom of information requests.

This government consistently fails when trying to protect the interests of Ontarians and to ensure accountability for hard-earned tax dollars, and that's why they've

lost confidence; that's why people have lost confidence in that government. It isn't about the polls that you read that put one party against another party. We don't pay any more attention to those than you do. Take a look at the answer to that question: Do you think it's time for change in Ontario? Any poll you see by any polling organization says it's roughly 75% of Ontarians that have lost confidence. Why would that be? Because you're not accountable. Liberals are not accountable.

We on this side of the House believe that all taxpayers deserve a government that fully accounts for their money and tells them how their money is spent, but the McGuinty Liberals don't want that. Halfway measures, as far as we are concerned, are not good enough. The experts at halfway measures over there were out at subway stops yesterday trying to convince—and I might say that "convince" is just the long form of "con"—people who ride the subway into believing that 10% is a great idea in reversing the effects of the hydro bills they get to open every day. Halfway measures are not good enough.

Unlike that side of the House, our actions match our words, and that is why the member for—

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Oh, you'll get your day in court. It's called October 6, 2011. And trust me, this side can't wait.

This is why the member for Nepean–Carleton introduced Bill 39, the Truth in Government Act, which, as I detailed previously, would have brought full accountability—full accountability—to government spending. That's what you promised. That's what people expected. That's why the confidence levels are not there. That's why you've got a lot of work to do if you think you're going to be even contenders in next year's election. I know you're not.

Bill 39 would definitely have expanded the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and, as I said, would have applied to all public bodies. I can't say that enough: all public bodies. Why would you exclude any? I can't think of any reason why we would want to exclude any public bodies. If we're going to be accountable for public dollars and the expenditure of public dollars, public bodies are the ones that use them. It would provide full, proactive disclosure of contracts over \$10,000 in value—not an insignificant amount of money to most families—to apply to all public bodies, and would ensure full, proactive disclosure of all travel and hospitality expenses, to apply to all public bodies—all public bodies.

Interjection: Would that be retroactive to 1995?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I don't even remember 1995.

It would demand full, proactive disclosure of all position reclassifications, to apply to all public bodies, and full, proactive disclosure of all grant and contribution awards over \$10,000, to apply to all public bodies.

But as you know, this government does not support full accountability. You can see this lack of accountability in spending. Cancer Care Ontario comes to mind. And the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. I spent so

much time on that. I wonder if that Windsor Energy Centre is producing any energy that's used in the system yet. I think not. A lot of hot air, but that's manufactured in Windsor as a matter of course. And the most recent scandal: Hospital dollars intended for front-line patient care have been used for Liberal lobbyists.

The Liberals did have an option. They could have supported Bill 39. They could have exposed the truth about this spending. But you see, if they had supported Bill 39, we would have been able to avoid many of the concerns that the auditor raised; instead, here we are on third reading of Bill 122, which does not go far enough but will be passed nonetheless, in the name of accountability.

Bill 122 only opens hospitals, not all provincial public bodies, to freedom of information. This bill only requires expenses to be disclosed at hospitals and LHINs, not all provincial public bodies. This bill only requires reporting on consultants, not all contracts for goods and services at all provincial public bodies. And these so-called reforms are now only being implemented because the Auditor General has once again exposed this Liberal government for what it is: an unaccountable, out-of-touch, ill-advised government, a government whose time is ticking away, ticking away.

If this Liberal government truly believes in protecting tax dollars, they will support the amendments the PC caucus have been bringing to committee, but such has not been the case.

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This bill does not protect the interests of Ontarians. It allows for the veil of secrecy to protect Liberal friends, and will continue to protect this Liberal government.

This is not the first time that this government has failed Ontario families and businesses. Look at the record of enforcement. This government likes to introduce all of the new laws but never takes responsibility to enforce.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I hear the noises coming from the other side.

We can all recount, off the top of our heads, the number and the names of the different pieces of legislation that have been enacted over the course of this term alone—forget about anything that goes before—where enforcement is completely lacking or, in some cases, lacking in large substance: smoking in cars; hand-held cellphones in cars; Smoke-Free Ontario—there's a good one; contraband and the enforcement there.

We have 309 days, and then you can come over here and take your turn as opposition, and we will talk about accountability then.

We only have to look at the local convenience stores I've been working with recently. They're in a survival battle. The Ontario Convenience Stores Association, with over 8,600 stores, are the most diligent people when it comes to checking the ages of their consumers in order to ensure that cigarettes are not sold to minors. With the toughest ID check program in Canada, OCSA is indeed helping to protect our youth from the dangers of tobacco

products. But what does this government go ahead and do? They refuse to address the issue of contraband tobacco at all. So where are we? Approximately 50% of tobacco sold in the province of Ontario is contraband tobacco. The tax dollars that are not coming in, at a time when even the most liberal of Liberals can agree with me that we are wanting for dollars in that kitty—we're half a billion dollars, minimum, shy when it comes to collecting what is our due on the sale of tobacco because of the fact that it circumvents normal channels.

It doesn't end there. The McGuinty government, since 2005, has brought in regulation after regulation after regulation on tobacco sales that negatively affect the convenience store owners. So you can see, whether it's an issue of accountability or enforcement or smart tax policies, the government just doesn't get it.

What more proof is needed than a comparison of our Bill 39 and this Bill 122? Already we see a dramatic shift in the political climate of Ontario, and this bill is another reason why. It is just plain not good enough. Ontarians deserve better, and Ontarians are signifying in their numbers that they're going to get better. We know, and it's sad that our friends across the way don't seem to know it.

This Liberal government has to come back to earth and has to actually bring some accountability and some honour back to the province of Ontario. But with legislation like Bill 122, I am afraid that they are still only talking the talk. They are not walking the walk.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, here we are at third reading of Bill 122, the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act. I'd like to quickly go with my 20 minutes that have been allocated to this bill and remind everybody why we're here today.

The story starts a year ago, with the Auditor General releasing his report on eHealth, where he showed that a billion dollars had been spent by eHealth Ontario with not a whole lot to show for it. eHealth was supposed to bring the people of Ontario an electronic health record. It didn't. We are very far away from it. A billion dollars—that's 1,000 million dollars—has gone, vanished, and we are still nowhere near an electronic health record.

People were appalled. People were disgusted. Heads rolled. The president of eHealth went. The executive director went. The Minister of Health left his portfolio and a new Minister of Health got appointed. People felt like we had to act; we had to put that behind us. Taxpayers' money should not be used in that way.

While all of this was going on—I sit on the public accounts committee. I told the Auditor General that maybe he should have a look at practices that were very similar to what was disgusting us with eHealth actually happening in our hospitals, and I managed to get the public accounts committee to agree to ask the Auditor General to have a look at the use of consultants by our hospitals. On October 20 the following year—this is two months ago, six weeks ago—the Auditor General tabled his report.

The result of his report was just as disgusting as what eHealth had showed us. The result of his report showed us the use of consultants by hospitals in ways that are completely inappropriate. We saw consultants costing us \$300 for a meal, including \$140 worth of alcohol. Another one cost us \$350 for three people for a meal, including \$215 of alcohol. There are people in Ontario who work full-time at minimum wage who don't make that amount of money in a week, and we have consultants using hospitals' money to wine and dine.

We saw consultants being paid \$398 per hour, for a total of \$2.6 million. We saw people, consultants again, who were charging \$1,100 a day for an eight-hour day, take a one-week trip to Hong Kong, add a one-week trip to Japan—and all this while being paid his full consultant fee of \$1,100 a day, no questions asked. The list goes on and on.

Mr. Howard Hampton: But it's only \$1 billion.

M^{me} France Gélinas: My colleague from Kenora–Rainy River says it's only \$1 billion.

The list goes on and on, but this is not what I want to talk about. I want to refocus on the bill.

Here we have this new report from the Auditor General. Nobody's questioning his findings. We all knew that what we had in black and white in front of us was the truth and we all knew that the truth was disgusting.

Before this, in the weeks leading to the October 20 release of the report, my leader, Andrea Horwath, raised in this House day after day and talked to us about the use of lobbyists by hospitals and by universities. By that she meant people who used to work for a Premier, people who used to work for the ministers in this House. People from the McGuinty government, who were being paid money to go and lobby their ex-employer—to go and lobby the ministers and the Premier. And you know what? It worked. If the hospital gave money to friends of the minister, the minister turned around and gave them money, so they were all on the bandwagon saying, "Well, we have to do this. If you give money to their friends, the ministers will give you money. This is a win-win. We should all do this." This is not the way it should work. This is not the way it should work in a democracy. This is not the way it should work in Ontario.

Then, after all of this, after we had exposed the use of lobbyists, after the Auditor General had exposed the use of consultants in a way that would disgust anybody who ever worked for his or her money, the government came forward with Bill 122—with a rather catchy title, if you ask me, the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act—because we all knew that if we wanted those practices to change we needed accountability. Accountability comes with transparency. Accountability will motivate people to do things better.

They introduced Bill 122. By the way, they introduced that bill the same day that the Auditor General released this report. This is to put you in the mood as to what was going on. This was important. It was so important to change the channel that on the same day that the Auditor General came out with his report, they came out with Bill

122. They were saying, loud and clear, that they could not stomach what they had read, that things had to change.

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Mr. Tom Clossen, the president of the Ontario Hospital Association, issued a public apology to the people of Ontario and said that he was sorry. Everybody knew that hospital money should not have been used that way, that this is unacceptable.

So here we are on October 20 and Bill 122 is being introduced, but we only go through about five opportunities for debate. By the time we had done our leads, that was it; the bill got time-allocated. "Time-allocated" is a fancy word for me that doesn't mean too much. What it means is that they cut off debate.

We knew that the bill had been slightly rushed out the door to meet the deadline of the Auditor General, and as we started to talk about this bill, we realized that it was a bit like Swiss cheese: There were some big holes in it. They agreed that the use of lobbyists was not right and that they shouldn't be used, but they left \$3 billion on the table that the hospital could use as they see fit and continue to hire lobbyists if they wanted to. Then the minister would tell us, "We won't pick up the phone," but what if you don't have call display or something like this? You'll still pick up the phone and there will be a lobbyist at the other end, and \$3 billion buys you a lot of lobbying.

So we started to see holes in the bill, but it didn't matter to the Liberals. They decided, "That's enough. You've had debate. We're going to move to public consultation." Okay. Time allocation, and we go to public consultation. At public consultation, we know that there are other jurisdictions that have been down this road before. We look to our federal colleagues who were also stuck with major scandals where taxpayers' money was used in ways that were completely unacceptable, and they brought forward accountability. There was a lot that Ontario could learn from their mistakes. You see, we don't have to make every single mistake in the book. We can learn from the federal government, a few of their mistakes, and fix up our legislation. But they refused.

The member from Nepean–Carleton and myself were at subcommittee. We agreed at the subcommittee level that we should travel, we should go to Ottawa, we should speak to the people who had worked on a similar bill at the federal level and learn from them. That was shot down. The Liberals did not want public consultations, to travel. Not only had they shut down debate in this House; they decided they didn't want to hear from the public either. So we had two days of hearings here in Toronto, and people came. People came and they showed us that the bill needed fixing at many levels. They showed us that maybe this had been taken out of the oven before it was fully baked, that the cake was not going to stay up, it was going to deflate, and that what had started out with good intentions, with accountability, may end up causing hospitals a serious problem with their continuous quality improvement program and it should be changed.

But here again we had limited debate. They said, "We're not going to travel. We're only going to have those two days," which really comes up to about six hours of committee consultation—that happened on Monday and Tuesday—"and then, by Friday, you have to have all of your amendments in." Then follows the free-for-all. We ourselves at the NDP put forward 23 amendments. Colleagues from the PC Party put even more than us, amendments for changes they wanted to the bill, and even the Liberals put close to a dozen amendments to their own bill.

We went through clause-by-clause and realized that this needed changing. They say that they want to ban the practice of using lobbyists, but then, when you ask them to put that language in the bill, no, it's not on. They put in language that basically says, "With the money that we transfer, you won't be allowed, but if you have any other source of money, then you can do as you see fit with it."

Everybody knows that every hospital, every university, every public sector does generate some of their own money: Think parking; think fees of all sorts; think fundraising. Every hospital has at least a fundraising effort going on every day of the week, of the month, of the year. We left all of that on the table. Quickly, just for hospitals, that's \$3 billion.

Then we said, "Well, you know, the Auditor General looked at hospitals, but there are other big players within the health care system. Long-term-care homes account for \$3.3 billion in funding from the Ministry of Health alone. In my book, \$3.3 billion is a lot of money. I think they should be included." "No, they're not going to be included. It's going to be that tiny wee list of people who will be included in the bill. You see, we want transparency, but we only want it for part of the money, for part of the people, for part of the agencies, for part of the time." What good is that when you already know that they all do fundraising, they all have other money for which the practice can continue?

When you start to look at the use of consultants, Bill 122 does say they will have to report on their use of consultants. Remember, transparency is one of the pillars of accountability. Once you make things transparent, people know, people demand accountability, and agencies become accountable. That sounds pretty good. They will have to have report. Then we noticed that they don't say exactly what they're going to report on, so we started to file amendments. They should report. They didn't talk about if those reports are going to be made public. Are they going to be accessible on a website?

When I started to put amendments forward asking them what should be in those reports, when they should be available and to whom, I got completely shot down. To this day, we have no idea if those reports will ever see the light of day.

The reports will be prepared, they will be submitted to somebody, but you and I and the rest of the people of Ontario who have demanded accountability, who want those practices to change, don't know if we'll ever get to see them. Why? If you're going to be accountable, why

aren't you accountable to the people of Ontario who elected us? Why don't you bring accountability right back to the people who demand transparency, who demand accountability? Make a few deposits into the trust account. You'll all know, if you've ever raised a teenager, that a trust account is something which you can make deposits to many, many times, but as soon as you take away from the trust account, it goes flat. Well, they want this trust account to be rebuilt. But, no, we have no idea.

I tried to bring forward amendments to this bill to make it accountable to the people of Ontario, to make it on schedule, to say that it's going to be available on a website, but we don't know. It was going to be left to somebody to decide, who isn't willing to share that information with us, but I sure wish they would.

So here we have a bill that talks about banning the use of lobbyists but leaves a lot of money on the table and excludes a whole bunch of agencies. You talk about making the hospitals and universities accountable for the use of consultants through reporting, but we know very little about those reports and we may never get to see them.

Then came freedom-of-information access. People have been wanting to have access to hospital information. I remind you that we spent over \$22 billion on our hospitals in Ontario and yet there is no transparency. This entire \$22 billion was completely opaque to everybody. Finally, we're going to have freedom-of-information access. You can file an FOI and the hospital will have to share that information with you.

There were issues happening with this. The Ontario Hospital Association, the Ontario Medical Association, HIROC, all came and said, "The way you have it written up right now puts our continuous quality improvement programs in jeopardy."

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The language that was first submitted to me was way too broad. There was no way I could accept this. It basically would have excluded anything you could label as quality improvement. At the end of the day, somebody who's way better at arguing than I am could make the argument that everything you do in a teaching hospital is to improve quality. You learn with your students, and you continuously improve quality. Therefore, everything that we do in a hospital is not FOI-able, which goes completely against what we're trying to do here, which is to improve accountability and improve transparency. And a big piece of improving transparency is being able to file FOIs, freedom of information, to the hospital.

At the eleventh hour, they brought new wording to this. Unfortunately, I never got to see the new wording till the Sunday night. I tried my best on the Monday morning. I asked the minister in this House, "What does the new wording mean?" I'm not a lawyer, but I have good judgment, I think. "What exactly does it mean? What would be included? What wouldn't be included?" I got as an answer: "We finally struck the right balance."

I would like to be the judge of this. Let me decide if this is the right balance. Just tell me what will be

included and what will be excluded. But nobody was able to answer my question. So when it came time for the vote, I couldn't agree to vote for something I didn't understand that had been submitted to me at the last minute.

Do I support continuous quality improvement? Absolutely, and I am really proud of some of the improvements we have seen in our hospitals lately. I hope they will continue. But at the same time, we need to realize that sharing information—transparency—is directly linked to improved quality.

I have lists of everybody who is FOI-able. There are 157 agencies right now that people in Ontario can submit FOIs to. A lot of them have to do with health: HealthForceOntario, Healing Arts Radiation, the health professions appeal board etc. There are 157 of them. They're all FOI-able, and I can tell you that they all have continuous quality improvement programs and they all work on improving quality. Here, we finally have a bit of transparency.

But another part that the people of Ontario wanted, and have been asking for, for a long time, is Ombudsman oversight of our hospitals. Why is it that in 2010, Ontario sticks out like a sore thumb as the only province or territory in Canada that does not have Ombudsman oversight of its hospitals? Our Ombudsman got 340 complaints last year. Those are people who had exhausted the hospital complaint mechanism, did not get closure, did not get satisfaction, tried to get to the bottom of what had happened and called the Ombudsman, only to be told, "I'm really sorry. I cannot investigate complaints from hospitals." If we wanted transparency, if we wanted accountability, they would have agreed to the amendment that would have brought Ombudsman oversight under this bill, but they didn't.

The title Accountability Act sounds good, but it falls way short of that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to speak to third reading of our government's proposed Broader Public Sector Accountability Act which, if passed, would raise the bar on accountability and transparency for hospitals, local health integration networks and other broader public sector organizations.

In 2004, our government passed legislation that expanded the scope of the Auditor General to include broader public sector organizations, including hospitals, which past governments had refused to do. Last year, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, with a majority of government members including myself, asked the Auditor General to look at the use of consultants and external lobbyists at hospitals and LHINs. In his report, released on October 20 this year, the auditor outlined certain practices by some hospitals and LHINs which our government felt could not be allowed to continue.

This government fully accepts the recommendations of the Auditor General. We are demonstrating our agreement with those recommendations by implementing each

and every one of them. Indeed, with this legislation we are going even further and setting even higher standards for accountability and transparency for the broader public sector.

The auditor's report shows that there is clearly more to do to improve procurement practices in the LHINs, and we're implementing all of those recommendations. LHINs are improving health care in our communities, giving people a say in local health care decisions, determining priorities through community engagement, supporting innovative programs, and removing silos through the integration of care.

We have seen the results of managing local health care from Queen's Park from past governments: closure of local hospitals, cuts to key programs, and a lack of understanding of local issues. Health care decisions are better made closer to home in the communities they serve by residents of those communities.

Instead, we have made significant investments in health care, over \$15 billion since taking office, and have given communities a voice in local health care decisions. LHINs are delivering results in the community. Every region has an integrated health services plan based on community input to guide decision-making for the next three years. Wait times are down; Ontario now has the lowest wait times in Canada for key surgeries and almost three hours shorter average waits for complex ER visits.

With this proposed legislation, we are taking strong action in order to send a very clear message: It is utterly unacceptable to our government for organizations to use precious public dollars for lobbyists instead of for the public service intended to benefit Ontarians.

Ce projet de loi nous permet de prendre des mesures énergiques et d'envoyer un message extrêmement clair : notre gouvernement estime qu'il est absolument inacceptable que les organismes utilisent les précieux deniers publics pour retenir les services de lobbyistes plutôt que pour assurer les services publics destinés aux Ontariennes et Ontariens.

This was one of the recommendations that came out of our public accounts committee some 10 months ago, when we discussed it: Procurement of significant IT developments was difficult to define, the deliverables were difficult to describe, the level of expertise was difficult to assess, and the timelines were complex. There is a history of IT projects being over budget, not meeting needs, delivered late. That goes back to when I was in business when I was with the city of Ottawa and we put the SAP project in: \$40 million. Purchasers within governments were often at the mercy of vendors. There was uneven technical expertise between vendor and purchaser.

At Infrastructure Ontario we have a group of experts who can deliver a building project through the planning, design, contracting and occupancy stages. They are available for all ministries. Why do we not have such a group that could plan, design, contract and implement large IT programs?

I'm pleased to note that our government has formed that group, IT Source. IT Source is a modern, mobile

force of OPS staff that can be deployed to IT projects across the government. We still need IT consultants, but we will be in a much better position to plan a program, to define the deliverables, and to estimate the costs and times. In addition, add-ons or modifications will not be sole-sourced, as there will be enough in-house knowledge and capacity to follow normal procurement rules. Public accounts, with the Auditor General, recognized this problem, and action has been taken by our government to facilitate procurement that will make it much easier to follow proper procurement rules and achieve better value for taxpayers.

In his report, the Auditor General mentioned that there will be improvements when it comes to procurement of consultants at my ministry and at LHINs. It is clear that there is much work to do when it comes to the use of consultants at hospitals. The current situation is not acceptable. That is why it was necessary to establish a new set of rules for hospitals and other broader public sector organizations, something, I might say, that previous governments neglected to do.

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Since we came to office in 2003, we have made it one of our top priorities to increase transparency and accountability in government. Let me give you some examples of what we have achieved: We introduced strict new procurement rules for all ministries and agencies, and are publicly reporting expenses; we expanded the powers of the Auditor General to review hospitals, colleges, universities, school boards and crown corporations; we brought Cancer Care Ontario, universities, Hydro One, OPG and local public utilities under the requirements of the freedom-of-information legislation.

This proposed legislation would, if passed, raise the bar even further and bring an even higher level of accountability and transparency to broader public sector organizations. This action is intended to increase integrity in the use of public funds and elevate the importance of value for money.

Following second reading, the bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. The committee received input, both orally, over two days of hearings, and in writing from interested individuals and many key stakeholder groups and organizations. Among the groups that came to present were the Ontario Hospital Association, the Ontario Medical Association, the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions, the Ontario Nurses' Association, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, the Canadian Association of Management Consultants, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the Office of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario, the Ontario Nonprofit Network and others.

I'm pleased to say that the majority of submissions made by these groups were supportive of our government's drive towards greater accountability and transparency in the broader public sector.

Je suis heureux de vous annoncer que la majorité des soumissions de ces groupes soutenaient l'engagement de notre gouvernement envers une responsabilité et une transparence plus grandes au sein du secteur public.

The committee received a total of 29 submissions from individuals and groups. The committee passed a number of important amendments to strengthen the bill, and I'm pleased to highlight some of those now. Based on a suggestion from the Ontario Bar Association, the committee passed the motion from the government to clarify that the intent of the legislation is not to require organizations to disclose information that would be subject to solicitor-client privilege.

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association raised concerns regarding how associations were covered by the bill. Their associations do lobby our government, so the government put forward an amendment to clarify that membership dues to associations do not count as public funds, which the committee passed.

The committee also passed an amendment put forward by the government to clarify the administration of the new rules under the Lobbyists Registration Act. This amendment was suggested by the Integrity Commissioner, and we were pleased to put it forward.

We were happy to support amendments brought forward by the opposition. In each case, the same amendment was brought forward by both the official opposition party and the third party. The opposition amendments passed are as follows: Having hospitals submit their reports on use of consultants to the LHINs; requiring that directives respecting expense postings contain certain information; requiring the public posting of LHIN attestations; and requiring the public posting of hospital attestations.

Unfortunately, we were unable to get unanimous consent for a provision that would have protected the quality groups that are being formed under the excellent care for all strategy, but that can be dealt with later.

We are fortunate to have some of the best hospitals in the world right here in Ontario. They are staffed by dedicated and committed people who have made it their life's work to help others. Our LHINs are doing an outstanding job planning and funding local health services, but we felt it was necessary to ensure that they applied more stringent controllership principles.

With this legislation, our aim is to ban the practice of hiring external lobbyists with taxpayer dollars in hospitals and other large public sector organizations and publicly funded organizations that receive more than \$10 million in government funds.

We're proposing to require large broader public sector organizations to follow new expense and procurement rules. In that vein, our legislation aims to—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order, you two.

Mr. Phil McNeely: — to ensure that publicly funded goods and services, including construction, consulting services and information technology, are acquired by broader public sector organizations through a process that is open, fair and transparent.

Our legislation aims to outline the responsibilities of broader public sector organizations throughout each stage

of the procurement process and to ensure that procurement processes are managed consistently throughout the broader public sector. This responds to the requests made by those who attended the public hearings to have clear and consistent rules in procurement for all publicly funded organizations.

We're proposing to require all hospitals and LHINs to report on their use of consultants and to post online the expense claims information for senior executives.

We're proposing to require that all hospitals and LHINs sign attestations attesting to the fact that they are in compliance with the legislation, including the new procurement requirements, and post these attestations on their websites.

We're proposing to make hospitals subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, effective January 1, 2012.

The Personal Health Information Protection Act would continue to govern all files containing any type of personal health information. No identifying information would be released by hospitals through freedom-of-information requests.

Finally, if senior executives of hospitals or LHINs fail to comply with these tough new rules, their pay could be reduced.

We are convinced that these measures are necessary to protect the interests of taxpayers and to strengthen government's accountability for the organizations it funds.

Nous sommes convaincus que ces mesures sont nécessaires pour protéger les intérêts des contribuables et pour renforcer la responsabilité du gouvernement relativement aux organismes qu'il finance.

We are absolutely focused on getting the very best value for our health care investments. That's why we're raising the bar for accountability and transparency across the board.

This legislation, if passed, would also be consistent with and reinforce the principles of our government's Excellent Care for All Act: that strengthened accountability and the prudent use of limited health care resources ultimately mean better value for the system and improved outcomes for Ontario patients.

Our goal is to ensure that we are doing everything in our power to improve public services for all Ontarians. What this proposed legislation would do is strengthen procurement rules and increase accountability and transparency in Ontario's broader public sector. This will go a long way towards protecting the integrity of public services in the province.

We need the support of every member for our act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector, and urge all members of this Legislature to pass this proposed legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? Does any member wish to speak?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 4, 2010, I am now required to put the question.

Ms. Smith has moved third reading of Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

I have received, pursuant to standing order 28(h), the appropriate request for deferral, signed by the chief government whip. This vote will be deferred until Thursday, December 2, after question period.

Third reading vote deferred.

TICKET SPECULATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE TRAFIC DES BILLETS DE SPECTACLE

Mr. Phillips, on behalf of Mr. Bentley, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act / Projet de loi 172, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le trafic des billets de spectacle.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I believe that this was time-allocated. I believe that the debate goes first to the opposition. If not, I'm happy to begin the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): You have the first option, but you can stay seated if you like, and I will then ask for further debate.

1650

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I will begin the debate. I would say that I look forward to the vote on this particular bill, and I will be sharing the vast majority of my time with the member from Willowdale.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm pleased to rise in the House today on behalf of the McGuinty government to bring forward for third reading proposed legislation that would, if passed, help to ensure fair access to entertainment tickets for Ontario's consumers.

For some time now, we've been hearing loud and clear from consumers that they are concerned about fair access to tickets. Why is that? Because at the moment ticket sellers in Ontario are able to profit from sales on both the primary and the secondary ticket markets. We have heard that tickets for Ontario events are finding their way into resale websites, to be sold at much higher prices, resulting in a shortage of tickets available at the original price established by the venue and the artist.

This is something you hear about wherever you go in the province of Ontario. Consumers are rightly infuriated by allegations that companies may be benefiting from both sides of the equation, thus restricting free markets. They just don't think that is fair, and this government—our government, the McGuinty government—agrees with

the people. That's why we've introduced this proposed legislation that would, if passed, respond to this growing concern.

While ticket scalping has been illegal in Ontario for some time, the advent of Internet ticket sales in 1996 and the development of software to defeat attempts by ticket agencies to limit Internet sales to a certain number per customer make enforcing existing laws extremely difficult.

Hon. John Gerretsen: How do the people in Willowdale feel about this?

Mr. David Zimmer: They are outraged, because they go to the North York arts centre and want to spend their consumer dollar wisely and they're often forced into the secondary market and pay a big buck, and then I get telephone calls. That's why I'm happy to speak to this legislation.

The members opposite should be happy to speak in favour of this legislation for the benefit of their respective constituents. Over here, we're all interested in the Ontario consumer and in our constituents. You should be too. That's why you should support this bill.

In addition, maximum fines for ticket scalping are not sufficient to deter scalpers, so we're going to do some more here. The proposed changes in Bill 172 would, if passed, remove the temptation to benefit from both markets at the same time. Removing temptation is a good thing. The current wording of the Ticket Speculation Act does not properly address certain issues central to the ticket resale market such as—here they are; this is key—related ticket vendors profiting from the primary and the secondary markets, and instances of corporate offences.

This legislation, if passed—I expect it will, and I urge the members opposite to support us in this—will help to ensure fair access at a fair price by preventing related primary and secondary ticket sellers, including brokers and agents, from profiting from secondary sales to the same event. The proposed changes would make it illegal for a primary seller to limit the number of tickets made available to the public and divert purchasers to a related secondary seller to buy the same ticket but at a much, much higher price. That's good for the Ontario consumer. Violators would be subject to maximum fines of \$5,000 for individuals and \$50,000 for corporations.

Lastly, if passed, this legislation would help to reassure Ontarians that when they buy online, the ticket they're buying is not just the profitable end point of some corporate shuffling of the cards.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Corporate shuffling?

Mr. David Zimmer: Corporate shuffling of the cards.

Since first reading, we have been responding to concerns brought to our attention by stakeholders to ensure that the wording of this legislation properly reflects the types of arrangements we want to deter—and this is the important part of the speech.

Interjections.

Mr. David Zimmer: Listen carefully, members opposite—and those of you who were at the clause-by-

clause this afternoon probably know what I'm going to say.

Based on our conversations with stakeholders, an amendment was adopted by the committee to ensure the bill targets only those who allegedly benefit from both markets while not interfering with the fair business practices that both benefit the public and support Ontario's economy. I urge you to look at the detail of that amendment; it's relative to subsection 2(3) of the bill. I know Mr. Kormos and Mr. Chudleigh at the clause-by-clause this afternoon were interested in that amendment and supported that amendment.

Fairness in the market is something that we are all after these days, and there is concern that some of the existing ways that tickets are sold in Ontario and, indeed, in Canada may not represent fair and just business practices. In these difficult economic times, when the consumer has to wisely choose to spend their entertainment dollars, it's a time to be vigilant and to protect the best interests of Ontario consumers.

As a community and as a government, we are working to rebuild, strengthen and sustain our economy. We are making progress. However, at the moment consumer confidence is at a premium, and exposure to unfair business practices in any market chips away at an already fragile and embattled consumer.

Along with strengthening Ontario's laws on ticket speculation, this proposed legislation also supports Ontario's recently announced Open for Business plan that is making Ontario stronger and more prosperous. One of the central themes of the Open for Business plan is transparency. That's important. Through communication, consultation and collaboration, Open for Business aims to create new, open and transparent relationships between government and businesses for the benefit of the entire Ontario population. If this legislation is passed, that's exactly what's going to happen as a result of this bill.

While we must work hard to ensure that Ontarians can trust that they're getting fair access to tickets at a fair price in an open market, we must also remember the principle of fair business practices extends beyond this specific issue. As we continue to move forward in our efforts, we will continue to vigilantly watch out for the best interests of Ontarians and ensure that at a minimum they receive the same protection as consumers in other jurisdictions in Canada and in North America.

Today, I call on the members opposite to support these amendments—and I know those members opposite who sat in on the clause-by-clause this afternoon did support this bill and, in particular, did support the amendments that were put forward.

This is about fairness, and it's also about nurturing the trust of the Ontario consumer. Trust on the part of the consumer is vital to building and strengthening Ontario's economy. That's why this is good legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have a few moments in which to comment on Bill 172, the Ticket Speculation Amendment Act, 2010.

1700

One of the things that I find really interesting in listening to the government is that there has certainly been much said about the question of who is actually selling tickets and the question of fairness in this process. I find it really interesting, because scalping has been around, I think, for just about as long as tickets have been sold, and although there is on the books a penalty for scalping, obviously it's not enforced.

It takes me back. In my own family I remember that my uncle, who spent quite a few years in Ottawa and was an avid hockey fan—long before the days of the Ottawa Senators, or this story wouldn't have happened—would drive to Montreal or Toronto to be there for playoff games. Of course, there was no Ticketmaster, so he would go to the scalpers at either the Montreal Forum or Maple Leaf Gardens and have the seats he wanted for those games. So it has always been around.

When this bill was first introduced, it was interesting because it was introduced, then there was over one year and there was absolutely nothing, no word on what had happened to this bill. It did survive a weekend of pro-roguing, though. Anyway, it came back again, and we were surprised after all of the absence. Then, all of a sudden, it's very, very important and compressed into time allocation and things like that. So after it sat on the shelf for 18 months, it has been dusted off now and put forward in this sort of hastened process.

What's interesting about it is that the bill itself is a page and a half, even with the French translation on the other side. The government introduced a motion in committee, which the member for Willowdale talked about, with regard to the amendment. I was quite surprised because the bill has four sections—five if we include the part that deals with the short title—and in fact the entire section 2 was to be struck out “and the following substituted” in this amendment that was moved in committee.

The only part of the bill that was of particular interest was the question about primary and secondary ticket sellers, and the original bill had identified that a secondary seller—and there are many secondary sellers, but the only one to be singled out was a secondary seller who was related to the primary seller. In the amendment we now have a wording change which suggests that if there is “an incentive for the primary seller to withhold tickets for sale by the primary seller so that they can be sold by, through or with the assistance of the secondary seller”—in other words, now it's not the issue of the relationship; it's the issue of an incentive.

Given that we're proceeding at breakneck speed in the passage of this bill at this point, after the 18-month hiatus, I wondered, is this bill ever going to be proclaimed? It seems to me that there is such a minor change, but that minor change is the key to the whole bill itself, so in fact, what the government has done is simply gutted what they had originally and put in something that I think successfully eliminates the concern by the people in the marketplace, ticket sellers.

I think, though, if we really wanted to talk about the real issue, the real issue is the potential proliferation of fraudulent tickets. Just as we now have a ticketless society—you get your computer printout—there is a greater danger of the sale of actually fraudulent tickets. That might have been a more useful activity for the government to be looking at: mechanisms by which people who go online and buy tickets and people who buy from scalpers can be assured that, in fact, it is a real ticket that they are buying.

For people who do buy tickets this way, it's worth pointing out that you are still buying tickets with US dollars. That's a demonstration of the complexity of the whole area of ticket selling and the secondary market, and the kinds of things that people were looking for in this bill. Certainly I had a couple of conversations, and people were looking for opportunities for what they felt was fairer access to tickets, where they could choose their seats, where they could see exactly which ticket they were buying. Well, this bill isn't going to help them with that. But certainly the more important thing to me is fraudulent tickets. And remember, it's still all in US dollars.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I checked the Canadian Oxford Dictionary for the definition of “screw-up,” and it says, “a bungle, a muddle, mess, or mistake.” This bill is one heck of a screw-up, let me tell you. The parliamentary assistant and his performance today were like a great actor who takes a crummy role in a cheap movie just for the money, sort of like Robert De Niro in Rocky and Bullwinkle. The sad thing is that that sort of stuff has ended many a career. I like the parliamentary assistant, and I'm hoping he has a chance to redeem himself before October 2011.

The theme throughout this debate around the amendments to the Ticket Speculation Act is that there are folks out there who think they're getting ripped off. There's been no question about that. The misimpression that's created by this legislation and the canned speeches by government members that have accompanied it, including the Attorney General's—you'll notice that the Attorney General retreated from this movie as quick as he could. He was out of this film faster than Britney Spears was out of rehab. He left it entirely with the parliamentary assistant, and I think I know why.

This bill, especially now, with the amendment that was proposed this morning, will prevent scalping by a reseller that is directly related or has a relationship with the seller. The Attorney General and his soldier tell us that that is going to address the concerns of all those people out there who can't buy tickets other than through resellers. If only that were the case; if only that were true.

The inference to be drawn during the course of the early part of the debate—the clear implication by the government—was that there was at least somebody out there, perhaps Ticketmaster, which owned TicketsNow, that was actually selling blocks of tickets directly to

TicketsNow so that TicketsNow could sell them at inflated prices, scalped prices.

1710

Well, Ticketmaster showed up at committee and said, "We don't do that." There is no evidence of a single operator, of a single reseller anywhere in Ontario that has a direct relationship with the original ticket agent. There's no evidence that Ticketmaster saves a single ticket so that it can be sold by TicketsNow, never mind blocks of tickets.

The issue is one that came up only tangentially. The problem here is resellers who use sophisticated computer programs to access the computer sites of ticket sellers.

The New York Times, December 16, 2007, business section, had an article by Randall Stross headlined, "Hannah Montana Tickets On Sale! Oops, They're Gone." Quoting from the article, "It is rather mystifying how ticket brokers, who are well represented among sellers on StubHub and other online ticket exchanges, have been so successful in snagging Hannah Montana tickets in plentiful quantities." Some of you will know who Hannah Montana is; I don't.

I go back to the article: "Ticket sales for big-name concerts now follow a distressingly consistent pattern: At 10 a.m. on a Saturday, tickets go on sale, and by 10:05 a.m., all tickets are sold. Yet by 10:05, StubHub and other ticket exchanges already have a plenitude of tickets listed for the sold-out event—only now, they cost much more....

"Some ticket brokers are so certain of their ability to get hold of desirable tickets that they confidently advertise tickets on these exchanges even before tickets go on sale to the public.

"How do they do it? An intriguing explanation is that brokers use specialized software to make multiple online purchases of tickets, circumventing the four-ticket-per-customer limit that the rest of us must abide by."

The article goes on to describe a lawsuit filed by Ticketmaster against RMG Technologies "asserting that the defendant's automated ticket-buying software violated the Ticketmaster website's terms of use." The court documents, the article says, "describe a subterranean world of software designed to enter Ticketmaster's online ticket-purchasing system at will and to scoop up tickets without limits."

Further in the article, "Kevin McLain, Ticketmaster's senior director of applications support, estimates that on some days, 80% of all ticket requests that arrive at its website are generated by bots," which I'm told by computer people is short form for robots.

This has nothing to do with an immediate relationship or arrangement between the seller and the reseller; this has to do with the use of the Internet to sell tickets to events and the development of sophisticated software that can access the seller's website within nanoseconds, as described in an article that I'm going to refer to shortly.

This New York Times article sums up, "The actual number of tickets vacuumed up by bots isn't known, and StubHub does not want to know. The sooner the 'sold

out' sign goes up at Ticketmaster, the sooner StubHub may break another sales record."

So you see, there are websites that host resellers, that host the scalped ticket, and the websites don't mind hosting them because it's not illegal for the websites to host them.

This bill doesn't end those websites because those websites that host resellers are not the resellers. The bill is very specific in that regard, and indeed the amendment today was designed to make it even clearer that websites that sponsor or host resellers are not violating the Ticket Speculation Act. So this bill does nothing, absolutely nothing to stop the gouging of consumers of sports and entertainment venues' events—absolutely nothing.

Let me try to make it a little clearer. Here's another article by Kim Zetter, and it's on the website wired.com, from March 1, 2010: "Wiseguys Indicted in \$25-Million Online Ticket Ring."

"A ring of ticket brokers has been indicted in connection to an elaborate hacking scheme that used bots and other fraudulent means to purchase more than one million tickets for concerts, sporting events and other events.

"The defendants made more than \$25 million in profits from the resale of the tickets between 2002 and 2009."

Further on in the article, "Wiseguy often obtained so many premium tickets for an event that it was the leading source for the best tickets to some of the most popular events, according to prosecutors. They allegedly purchased tickets to Miley Cyrus, Barbra Streisand, Bon Jovi and Bruce Springsteen concerts, as well as tickets to the Rose Bowl football game in 2006 and the 2007 Major League Baseball playoffs at Yankee Stadium....

"The indictment lists the initials of three contract workers in Bulgaria who each earned between \$1,000 and \$1,500 a month writing code and managing the network.

"Law-abiding online ticket vendors sell tickets on a first-come, first-served basis and have invested millions of dollars in architecture that queues up customers in the order they arrive to a site. This protocol reserves a ticket or block of tickets in the system for a limited time, such as five minutes, while the buyer decides whether to complete the purchase" or not.

"Premium tickets can sell out within 30 seconds for popular events, making it crucial where a buyer stands in the queue." We're talking about the original seller, where premium tickets can sell out within 30 seconds for popular events.

"To prevent bots from purchasing tickets in bulk, online ticket vendors use CAPTCHA challenges and proof-of-work software that is designed to detect and slow down computers that are attempting to purchase large numbers of tickets. Online vendors also block IP addresses used to make bulk purchases."

Further in the article, "Ticketmaster used various means to try to thwart Wiseguy's operation, at one point switching to a service called reCAPTCHA, which is also used by Facebook. It's a third-party CAPTCHA that feeds a CAPTCHA challenge to a site's visitors. When a

customer tries to purchase tickets, Ticketmaster's network sends a unique code to reCAPTCHA, which then transmits a CAPTCHA challenge to the customer."

This is the important part: "But the perpetrators were able to thwart this as well. They wrote a script that impersonated users trying to access Facebook" etc. and, in fact, overcame CAPTCHA and reCAPTCHA, which are software mechanisms designed to protect ticket sellers from the bot users.

"Wiseguy also had a bank of about 1,000 phone numbers that the bot submitted as customer contact numbers.

"The bot would seize a block of prize seats, from which Wiseguy employees would cull the best for clients, then release unwanted seats back to the system. A legitimate ticket buyer who tried to purchase the same seats during this time might find them unavailable one minute, then available the next minute."

Look what these guys do. These are the scalpers who aren't touched, they aren't even close to being touched, by this legislation.

The consumer in Ontario, the Ontario of 2010, isn't being protected one iota by this legislation when it comes to scalpers. There's no evidence—there was no evidence, none whatsoever at any point during this discussion, during this debate, of a seller and reseller that were related. Because, you see, TicketsNow, as we've learned, is simply a host website for other people selling the tickets.

I went to TicketsNow, and I have no doubt that some of the bot operators use TicketsNow to sell their tickets. I went to the TicketsNow website earlier today, and I saw tickets for the same event, same seating area with a range of prices, indicating two were available, four were available. These are the resellers, not TicketsNow. TicketsNow isn't a reseller. The individuals who own the tickets are the resellers; similarly, the bot operators who buy thousands of tickets. Obviously, they want only the high-end tickets because these have the biggest scalping value.

1720

What we learned from that article, this indictment and the prosecution of Wiseguys, is that they'll even return—they're just out there, they're throwing a net out and they're doing it bang, bang, bang, in nanoseconds with a whole pile of different computers communicating with the computer of the original seller, of the ticket agent, whether it's Ticketmaster or anybody else. Then the fish that are too small, they simply throw them back and they get refunded for them. It's fascinating.

Unfortunately, the government clearly didn't do its homework, clearly doesn't understand the issue, clearly didn't want to do its homework or explain the issue to the people of Ontario, wants to walk away from this, leaving the impression that it's engaged in some consumer protection when it's done zip, zero, nada, not a thing, nothing. Ticket buyers in Ontario will learn that in short order.

As soon as this bill is proclaimed, the practice will persist. Mark my words. It's not scalpers who are con-

nected with the ticket agent, with the original seller, who are doing the gouging. That scalper doesn't exist. It's chimerical. It's a figment of the Attorney General's imagination, or perhaps some genius in the Premier's office.

Mr. Peter Shurman: There are none of those.

Mr. Peter Kormos: He notes.

This villain is not even a comic book character. Tony Soprano is more real than the villain that the government says it's dealing with in this legislation. Zorro is more real, for Pete's sake. Popeye is more real. To the young people here, Popeye was an old cartoon character. Mr. Hillier remembers him. So does Mr. Shurman.

Another interesting item that helps explain the issue from *Everything Jersey, nj.com*, is an article by Peggy McGlone reprinted from the *Star-Ledger*, and it's published March 19, 2010: "Lady Gaga performs at Radio City Music Hall in January. Automated programs created by hackers stampede the virtual ticket window to be first in the ticket queue and grab up choice seats.

"If you want to see Lady Gaga at Madison Square Garden in July"—and for the life of me, I don't know why you'd want to—"you'll probably be at your computer this morning before 10 a.m., ready to strike when tickets for the much-anticipated concert go on sale.

"But you probably won't score a prime seat. You, gentle human, can't beat the machines.

"Automated programs will stampede the virtual ticket window, be first in the virtual queue and grab up the choice seats. They do it for every big tour, be it Bruce Springsteen, the Black Eyed Peas or Tom Petty. Through their high volume of requests and lightning speed, these programs try to box out the regular fan in an effort to snag the best tickets to the hottest events."

The article goes to explain the nuts and bolts of bots:

"Simply, a bot is an automated program that navigates a website faster and more efficiently than humans can. A bot can be programmed to answer questions in a flash or to skip through those web pages that are informational but don't require action, thereby arriving at the finish line—the buy button—in seconds.

"Bots also have an advantage because of their volume. They hit simultaneously, causing stress to the vendors' systems but virtually guaranteeing that at least a small percentage of the attempts will be successful.

"More prevalent now because the majority of tickets are purchased on the internet, bots have dramatically altered the ticketing industry because they make prime seats so hard to buy at face value."

It further describes what a tough fight it is to deal with the bots, like the CAPTCHA program or the reCAPTCHA program. Every time some software developer develops a program that is designed to control the bots or resist them, somebody smarter or as smart comes up with a program designed to circumvent that defensive program..

Again, in the federal case against the Nevada computer firm Wiseguys, authorities claim the programmers used thousands of different computers, each reaching the ticket window at the exact second it opened and speeding

through the security challenges to gain access to the first and best tickets.

It goes on to say, "No matter how hard you work to make things fair, the Internet has changed the game. You have to take the good with the bad. With the comfort and ease of buying online comes the ease of this. It's the brave new world."

The government didn't even contemplate this phenomenon. The government denies and ignores this phenomenon. The government knows but won't acknowledge that its bill does nothing to address this phenomenon. The government doesn't enforce the existing Ticket Speculation Act. It indicated clearly that it has no intention of enforcing this one, first of all, because there's nobody to enforce it against. No entity exists like the one that's described in this bill, in this legislation, as perpetrating or committing the crime of ticket speculation, of scalping. It's non-existent. It's a ghost. It's an imaginary person. It's not there. It's like a dream that isn't real. For the life of me, why this government won't come clean in that regard, why it won't be straight with Ontarians, why it won't fess up about how it botched up, screwed up this whole exercise beats me.

I don't fault the parliamentary assistant. He does what he gets told to do, and he does it well 99% of the time, and he does it with good humour most of the time.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Vote against it? Why? Why not vote for it? It's fluff. It's zero. It has nothing, not even an aroma, although there is a stench about it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'll start by congratulating the Liberal government on Bill 172. They have managed to get a bill to third reading that does absolutely nothing. What I should also congratulate them on is, this is a very unique Liberal bill because, for once, it also doesn't harm people in Ontario. So it does nothing, but it doesn't harm people. That is a very unique set of circumstances for this Liberal government. Seldom do we get a bill that doesn't harm the people of Ontario.

As the member from Welland mentioned, this bill does absolutely nothing. There's no consumer protection here. There's nothing of any substance whatsoever in Bill 172. Scalpers will still be allowed to scalp. There's never been a conviction, never been a charge on that, and it's going to continue. It's a meaningless bill.

It reminds me much of, when my children were in school, they would often refer to busywork. The teachers would assign busywork just to keep the kids occupied and keep them quiet so that the teachers were able to do something else. Of course, busywork is meaningless work. It has no value. It's like counting the grains of sand on a beach or counting the number of whitecaps on the lake—something that takes up and occupies time but provides no benefit and no value. That's what Bill 172 is: counting the whitecaps, counting the grains of sand. It does nothing. But once again, it doesn't harm the people of Ontario.

What I find absolutely amazing with this Liberal government—here we have a bill put up by the Attorney General's office, the highest lawmaker and law protector. The guardian of our liberties is the Attorney General. We have seen such injustice in places such as Caledonia or Deseronto. We have seen the Ponzi schemes and scams thrown out because there are not enough resources at the Attorney General's office. On and on and on, we see the failings of our justice system under the bailiwick of the Attorney General.

1730

Instead of addressing any of those substantive failings in our justice system, he brings out Bill 172.

Has he put any effort into the G20 and the SIU investigations? Nothing. Has he put any effort into addressing the problems in Caledonia? Zero. Has he put any effort into addressing the backlogs in our court system? Nothing. But he brings out a bill that does nothing, absolutely zero.

Mr. Peter Kormos: So he's consistent.

Mr. Randy Hillier: He is consistent, very consistent, a consistent failure, failing the people of Ontario.

The Attorney General is engaging in busywork. The Attorney General, however, is also wasting the time of the legislators in this assembly, wasting the time of the people of this province, spending countless hours debating a bill that does nothing, that provides no protection, while he gets to turn his back on the clear and utter failings of his ministry and our justice system in this province.

It is an absolute travesty that this Attorney General views his responsibilities in such a cavalier and contemptible manner that he would bring out Bill 172, the Ticket Speculation Act, which does nothing, and refuses to even put any effort into the real failings under his authority.

But it's not only that. It's not just the Attorney General. What about the Premier, and what about all the other members of cabinet? Here Ontario is facing the highest unemployment rate. We have suffocated and snuffed out hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs. Has the government brought in something to deal with that? No. Zero. Have they done anything about the high unemployment rate? Zero. Nothing.

This Liberal government continues on its path of putting Ontario in a have-not position, and what is their solution? Their solution is Bill 172, which does nothing about scalping tickets.

If anybody wants to understand why there is apathy and complacency in this democracy, all they have to do is look at the results of the Liberal government in Ontario. That's all you have to do. Look at the busywork they're engaging in. And people understand. That's why three quarters of the people have been fed up with this Liberal government. They understand they are completely out of touch. They're in a fantasy world that has no relation to reality. As the good member from Welland mentioned, Zorro is more real than anything tangible in Bill 172.

Absolutely. The Liberals are indeed in the Alice in Wonderland world. Fantasia is where they are.

But the consequence—and I'll say this to all the members who are still awake over on the other side—the real consequence is that you are diminishing yourselves by introducing legislation like this and by supporting legislation like this. You are diminishing your own value to your constituents. You're diminishing your own value in your role in democracy by advocating busywork legislation.

It should come as no surprise to the members on the Liberal benches, when October 2011 rolls around, that you're no longer occupying those benches. It will be no surprise. It will be no surprise to anybody, and it's time that this assembly starts engaging in substantive policy, substantive discussions on matters that will improve the standard of living and reduce the productivity gap in this province so that we can once again get on the right track of improving our standard of living instead of reducing and diminishing it.

With that, Bill 172 does not deserve any more discussion or debate. Let it pass into the black hole of Liberal legislation that does nothing for the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? Does any other member wish to speak?

Therefore, pursuant to the order of the House dated November 17, 2010, I'm now required to put the question.

Mr. Phillips has moved third reading of Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

I have received, pursuant to standing order 28(h), a request that the vote on Bill 172 be deferred, and it's signed by the chief government whip. This bill will be deferred until after question period on Thursday, December 2.

Third reading vote deferred.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Phillips has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On division.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): On division, the ayes have it.

This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock on Thursday, December 2.

The House adjourned at 1737.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

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Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
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Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
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Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
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Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
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Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

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Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor-Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC) Elliott, Christine (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord Whitby-Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Oakville Mississauga East-Cooksville / Mississauga-Est-Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
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Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / Thunder Bay-Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora-Rainy River Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
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Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Trinity-Spadina Cambridge	
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McNeely, Phil (LIB) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa-Orléans Ottawa-Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound-Muskoka Hamilton East-Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est-Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron-Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Naqvi, Yasir (LIB) O'Toole, John (PC) Orazietti, David (LIB) Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC) Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB) Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB) Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre Durham Sault Ste. Marie Oshawa Kitchener-Conestoga Elgin-Middlesex-London Scarborough-Agincourt	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Prue, Michael (NDP) Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Beaches-East York Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) Ramal, Khalil (LIB) Ramsay, David (LIB) Rinaldi, Lou (LIB) Ruprecht, Tony (LIB) Sandals, Liz (LIB) Savoline, Joyce (PC) Sergio, Mario (LIB) Shurman, Peter (PC) Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord London-Fanshawe Timiskaming-Cochrane Northumberland-Quinte West Davenport Guelph Burlington York West / York-Ouest Thornhill Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
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Witmer, Elizabeth (PC) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB) Yakabuski, John (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Elizabeth Witmer
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Commonwealth
Parliament

No. 78



Nº 78

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 2 December 2010

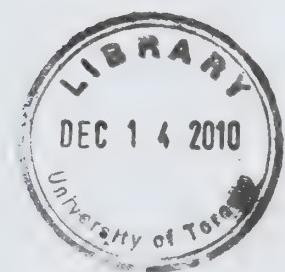
Jeudi 2 décembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

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Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



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Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 2 December 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 2 décembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 FAVORISANT DES COLLECTIVITÉS FORTES GRÂCE AU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

Mr. Bartolucci moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2010, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 140, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur les services de logement, abrogeant la Loi de 2000 sur la réforme du logement social et apportant des modifications corrélatives et autres à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I will be sharing my time with the member from Etobicoke Centre. Before I get into my remarks, I would like to spend a few minutes thanking several people who worked so very, very hard on this particular piece of legislation.

If I had to compare this place to a school, there's the principal and the vice-principal. The vice-principals here are called our parliamentary assistants. They don't get the recognition or the credit they deserve. I know members on both sides of the House here will say how hard parliamentary assistants work. This is an example of the incredible dedication shown by Donna Cansfield, the member from Etobicoke Centre, who did so much during the formation of this bill. I certainly want to thank her.

I also want to thank our second parliamentary assistant, Lou Rinaldi, the member from Northumberland–Quinte West. The reality is, as Donna and I were removed from our ministry in order to ensure that this legislation was right, Lou had to do a lot of the heavy lifting within the ministry. I just want to thank him so much.

I would be remiss, as well, if I didn't thank the incredible public servants we have in the Ministry of Municipal

Affairs and Housing, led by our deputy minister, Bill Forward; Janet Hope, our ADM; Melissa Thomson, the director of housing policy. They were critical to getting this piece right.

I also want to thank two former ministers, Jim Watson and Jim Bradley, who really worked hard on this legislation as well.

We have to do everything within the confines of the law, so Adam Lawlor from our legal branch was very, very important along this entire process.

Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't thank Brian Teefy, who is the political policy adviser for my ministry. He worked so, so very hard.

Publicly, to all those individuals, thank you so much. And thanks to the many people across the province of Ontario at 13 centres who took part in the consultation process.

Our government is looking to be more resourceful and strategic in developing real solutions in light of the fiscal pressures we all face. The proposed Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act, 2010 and related long-term affordable housing strategies introduce a package of initiatives that will transform the face of affordable housing in Ontario. It provides a solid foundation and the necessary framework to work with our housing partners to provide safe, affordable housing choices for Ontarians.

As David Rennie, president of the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, has said, "This strategy articulates the province's recognition of the importance of strong partnership and collaboration with municipalities in the area of housing." And as Sharad Kerur, executive director of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, has said, "This strategy, and the accompanying legislative reforms, should create much-needed local flexibility, allowing communities to better engage the power of community-based non-profit housing providers in meeting local housing needs."

Affordable housing plays a critical role in addressing many of the province's most pressing challenges. It helps to lift low-income families out of poverty by reducing the cost of housing and freeing up income to pay for other family needs such as food and clothing. There is widespread evidence that safe, adequate and affordable housing is a key factor in determining health, and has a positive impact on the educational achievement of children and families.

According to the Canadian Council on Social Development, children living in adequate housing have significantly higher overall health and do better in school

than those living in inadequate housing. Affordable and social housing also provides the opportunity to build stronger communities and neighbourhoods.

The redevelopment of Regent Park in Toronto is one example that illustrates the positive impact of building communities that are well-integrated, have local community services and supports, and attract investment.

In addition to the social benefits of investing in affordable housing, there is also a significant economic impact. New affordable housing units typically generate 2.2 person-years of employment per unit. An investment of \$100,000 in social housing renovation creates 1.8 person-years of work per unit. For example, the \$1.2-billion housing funding that was announced in the 2009 budget is estimated to create 23,000 jobs.

Housing is important to the people of Ontario, and housing matters for many reasons. There are too many people living on the streets, perhaps trapped by mental illness or addiction. There are too many children in Ontario who worry about when they will have to move again and change schools. There are too many people in Ontario who can't find a home where they can manage their disability and live independently.

Housing matters, because if a person can have a home, they can have dignity, they can care for their family, they can be involved in their community, they can get an education and they can get a job and plan for the future.

Let me spend a few seconds talking about the vision, principles and pillars that this legislation depends upon. The vision that has guided our strategy reflects this: to improve Ontario's access to adequate, suitable and affordable housing, and to provide a solid foundation on which to secure employment, raise families and build strong communities.

As the strategy is long-term in reach and broad in scope, it will be guided by six key principles.

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The first principle is that this strategy is people-centred, meaning that housing programs, services and supports should be based on a people-first approach that focuses on positive results for individuals and families.

The strategy is partnership-based. Housing in Ontario requires strong partnerships between all levels of government, non-profit and co-operative housing providers, and the people who require housing support to build healthy, sustainable and inclusive neighbourhoods.

Third, the strategy is locally driven, meaning that affordable housing must be locally relevant and provided in a supportive environment that includes access to jobs, community resources and services.

The strategy is supportive, as housing policy in Ontario should help those who are in need of housing to move into permanent, affordable housing with appropriate support services.

The strategy is inclusive, meaning that all persons have the right to equal treatment and protection from discriminatory practices that limit their housing opportunities.

The strategy is fiscally responsible and needs to reflect fiscal circumstances as they evolve to promote a diverse housing marketplace that helps Ontarians access affordable housing.

We have listened to our stakeholders and partners, and that has helped us shape our long-term strategy that focuses on results for people. The strategy sets the stage for a transformed affordable housing system built on four key pillars: putting people first, creating strong partnerships, supporting affordable options and accountability.

The strategy builds, in particular, on our strong partnership with municipalities. In 2008, the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review reached a landmark agreement that will provide municipalities with a net benefit of \$1.5 billion annually by 2018. The review was a wide-ranging initiative that examined the provincial-municipal relationship in order to improve the delivery and funding of services for Ontarians. Our long-term strategy builds on many recommendations from the review, including working together to build locally managed housing services, a stronger focus on positive results for people and simplifying the delivery of income assistance supports.

One of the consensus recommendations that resulted from the review was the need for the province to work with its municipal partners "towards consolidating the existing range of housing and homelessness programs into a housing service managed at the municipal level." The consolidation of housing and homeless programs is a cornerstone of our strategy that will allow funding to be used in a more flexible manner to address local housing needs.

Affordable housing is also an important part of Ontario's poverty reduction strategy, which concluded in 2008 that the province needed to work with its housing partners to make it easier for families to find and maintain affordable housing. In 2009, we held extensive province-wide consultations to hear from the public, our partners and stakeholders about different perspectives on the housing system. We held 13 different public consultation sessions in communities across Ontario.

Our consultations told us that the current housing system is too complicated and overly restrictive. We heard that there are too many programs with too many rules with too much red tape that do too little for the people they're supposed to serve. We also heard that the current system does not adequately address local needs and local priorities.

During our consultations, it became very clear that the existing issues within the housing system are highly complex and that a multi-pronged response to address legislative, program and service delivery challenges was required. Through these consultations, Ontarians, municipalities and stakeholders—the people on the front lines who use and deliver housing services—have helped shape the long-term strategy.

The need for a long-term affordable housing strategy has been a long time coming for Ontario. In the late 1990s, the province transferred responsibility for social

housing to the municipal part, as part of the local services realignment. In order to facilitate devolution, the province created 47 municipal and district social services administrative bodies, known as service managers, that are responsible for the management of housing services across the province. At that time, the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000, was introduced as a mechanism to implement the transfer of social housing to service managers. The Social Housing Reform Act was developed to ensure that the province had sufficient oversight as service managers transitioned to a new responsibility as the primary funders and administrators of social housing. This legislation, we found out, was highly prescriptive, complex and an administrative burden. It was like Big Brother was overseeing what the municipalities were doing, which is why we need better legislation that also reflects current realities in the housing system.

Over the past 10 years, service managers have developed the capacity and experience to manage and administer social housing programs, services and supports. We thank them for that. Service managers have embraced their role as the service system managers for housing programs and are best positioned to assess local needs, set local priorities and integrate services. This was confirmed by the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review. Our proposed new legislation would more fully recognize local government as a capable, responsible and accountable order of government. The heavy-handed restrictions in the Social Housing Reform Act, whether intended or unintended, are no longer necessary and limit the ability of service managers to develop housing solutions that best meet local needs.

This does not mean that we are abandoning our interest in housing. In fact, through the proposed legislation the province is strengthening accountability through a new shared accountability framework with service managers. The proposed legislation would set out key provincial interests that service managers must address in developing new local housing and homelessness plans. The province will also work with service managers to develop local performance measures to track progress in implementing these local plans and will help ensure that there is strong mutual accountability between service managers and the province. This is truly a partnership.

Over the past seven years, the McGuinty government has re-engaged in the housing area because we understand that stable, affordable housing opens doors for a better future for Ontario families. Our government has developed various new programs and made significant investments in affordable housing, and we have worked with our municipal and federal partners to provide more housing supports to those in need. Under our government, the largest affordable housing agreement in Canadian history was signed with the federal government.

However, despite our significant investments, additional work is required to ensure that the range of housing and homelessness programs, supports and services work better. The current system of housing and homelessness services is highly complex, involving federal,

provincial and municipal funding, and cost-sharing arrangements with a variety of service delivery partners involved in overlapping human services. There are too many programs, each with their own design, rules, eligibility and target groups. In this sort of environment, with narrow program parameters, service providers can struggle to help people with complex needs. Those in need can find it difficult and discouraging to gain access to complicated and uncoordinated programs.

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This strategy, thankfully, introduces a number of policy initiatives that are centred on producing positive results for individuals and families. It recognizes that local flexibility offers the best path to address the diverse needs across our province in order to build healthy, strong communities. The proposed new legislative framework would be more responsive to local needs.

A good housing strategy must be about people, neighbourhoods and communities, rather than what best suits government. Under the strategy, service managers would develop multi-year housing and homelessness plans that reflect provincial interests and address local housing and homelessness needs. This approach would also accommodate the specific housing needs of different areas of the province, such as rural and northern Ontario, where a unique housing response is often required.

Service managers would also have a more active role in policy and the design and delivery of local programs, supports and services. For example, under our strategy, funding that must currently be used for shelter beds could instead be used to house a person in more stable and affordable housing, and the remaining funds can be used to provide additional social supports for the now housed individual. By giving our municipal partners that flexibility to use provincial funds in a way that makes sense at the local level, people will have a real opportunity to improve their lives.

This is a real example of how our innovative people-first strategy would work. Housing programs would be flexible and tailored to different needs, and tax dollars would be used more efficiently. Paul Johnson, the director of Neighbourhood Development Strategies—

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: A good guy.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The Minister of Revenue says he is a good guy. I met him for the first time on Tuesday; he is a wonderful guy.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: He does a lot for Hamilton.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Yes, he works with the city of Hamilton. He has said, “Consolidating existing funding portfolios will provide opportunities for communities to develop innovative solutions that can ensure stronger outcomes for the unique needs of the people they serve.” It makes sense.

We would also put people first by reforming the rent-geared-to-income calculation process. Under the current system, a tenant living in a rent-geared-to-income unit must declare every time their income changes, which can result in immediate increases—immediate increases—in their rent. This can make it very difficult to get ahead. It

creates barriers and provides disincentives to work. It also means that service managers have to spend a lot of their resources and time on administering the rent-geared-to-income system.

Our legislation, if passed, would simplify the rent-geared-to-income calculation process. In most instances, tenants would only declare their income once a year, allowing them to use extra money to increase their standard of living, rather than having it clawed back on their rent—something that is clearly a disincentive. As Mary-Anne, a single mother living in Ontario, has said, “My dream is home ownership. With this change to the way the rent is calculated, it will make it that much easier to do so. I know there are lots of people who need to live in a place like this. If I can move out and give someone else the opportunity that I have had by living in a co-op on rent geared to income, that would be fantastic.” She has lived the experience and welcomes the change.

As a province, we are working to ensure the sustainability of public services. We need to be concerned not just with spending the dollars we have a responsibility for today, but thinking about how to manage current programs, activities and resources in a way that can be sustained over time.

To help put things into perspective, this strategy comes at a time when Ontario and the rest of the world are adapting to the fiscal realities of the recession. Governments are experiencing higher demand for social supports while at the same time coping with a lower revenue base. Over the last few weeks, we have heard about the drastic cuts governments around the world are making to housing and other human services. While the current fiscal circumstances limit our ability to make additional investments in housing at this time, affordable housing remains a significant priority for our government. The strategy provides a foundation and direction for future investments and focuses on doing better with existing resources.

While a significant milestone, Ontario’s long-term affordable housing strategy is the beginning of a journey to deliver real housing solutions for Ontarians. The future of housing depends on adequate, sustained funding, which is why a long-term commitment is needed from the federal government as well. The lack of long-term sustainable funding limits the ability of housing providers to plan long term and fully participate in capital projects that build more affordable housing.

I think it’s a well-known fact that Canada is the only G8 country without a national housing strategy. We need the federal government to lead a coordinated national response to address the need for adequate housing across Ontario. Ontario will be a willing partner in that. We also call on our fellow provincial and territorial counterparts to join our efforts to engage the federal government to create a housing framework that includes long-term, flexible funding for affordable housing. It’s very important that we do so, each province, each territory and our country as a whole, and so we reinforce the need for a federal long-term affordable housing strategy.

Our long-term strategy is an extension of Ontario’s commitment to affordable housing and is about making

our investments work better for people. Over the past few years, our significant investments in affordable housing have helped families and individuals in communities across Ontario. Here are some of the ways we’ve done that: More than \$2.5 billion has been invested to build and repair over 200,000 units of affordable and social housing; more than 35,000 rent supplements have helped low-income Ontarians pay their rent, which includes a \$50-million short-term rent support program that will be available in 2011; and more than \$430 million is invested in annual operating funding for housing and homelessness services. These programs and services have clearly made a real, positive impact for people and communities. Now we are focusing on making even better use of the resources at our disposal to ensure that housing programs and services produce the best possible outcome for Ontarians.

This plan continues our government’s commitment to develop good public policy that creates opportunities for people to achieve their full potential. As Keith Ward, the president of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, has said, “The long-term affordable housing strategy is an important moment in the history of affordable housing in Ontario.”

I’d now like to pass my time over to my very hard-working parliamentary assistant, Donna Cansfield, the member for Etobicoke Centre.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Thank you, Minister. In our 2007 platform, this government made a commitment to create a long-term strategy for affordable housing in Ontario. Today we are making good on that commitment.

You heard the minister speak about how our consultation on this strategy told us that the current housing system is too complicated and that it creates barriers for people in need. The people who deliver housing programs told us they were unable to develop the best possible services because of dated provincial rules.

Last year, this government held consultations in several communities across our province. Over 1,100 Ontarians attended these consultations, and we received over 100 formal submissions from housing stakeholders and organizations. We also held specialized round table sessions which included landlord and tenant organizations, municipalities, home builders associations, social and cooperative housing organizations, seniors’ organizations, aboriginal partners and social advocacy groups. Our approach to developing this long-term strategy was inclusive, it was comprehensive, and it was thorough.

I would like to thank the dedicated individuals and organizations that helped shape this long-term strategy. Their expertise is respected, and their commitment to improving lives and building strong communities helps to make Ontario a great place to live.

Some of the key issues that were identified through the consultation process include, one, the need to reform the existing social housing legislation; secondly, the need

to increase local flexibility to deliver and to promote affordable housing opportunities; and, third, the desire to work closely with and engage the federal government to seek long-term support of affordable housing. I would like to speak briefly about each of these issues.

In terms of legislative reform, it was very evident from our consultations that a far more strategic legislative framework was needed for affordable housing in Ontario. Ten years ago, the province got out of the housing business. Local service realignment represented the largest reorganization of provincial and municipal responsibilities in the history of Ontario. The Social Housing Reform Act was used to facilitate the transfer of funding and administration for social housing to municipalities.

The McGuinty government re-engaged in housing. Under our government, record investments in affordable housing have taken place. We've also recognized that the Social Housing Reform Act, with all of its many rules and regulations, and which goes on for hundreds of pages, is far too cumbersome. We heard from many of our partners and stakeholders as well; they felt the same.

Our new legislative framework would be people-centred and provide a strong foundation for moving forward. It would chart government direction for new investments. It will provide a coherent plan for addressing housing needs across the housing continuum from homelessness to mortgage-free ownership and to inform federal-provincial negotiations so that federal money is spent as efficiently and quickly as possible to benefit those Ontarians in need.

Our government is proposing a new bill that introduces proposed new affordable and social housing legislation and also proposes to amend provisions in the Planning Act and the Residential Tenancies Act. We have introduced new legislation in this Legislature that, if passed, would transform the way housing and homelessness services are delivered, focusing on achieving better outcomes for people. This new legislation would provide a single overarching policy direction for affordable housing. It would have clear linkages to the homelessness prevention and support systems. It will clearly define the new provincial role as a steward of Ontario's housing system. This would mean setting out provincial interests to be respected in community housing plans, introducing new indicators to measure progress of these plans and establishing a shared accountability framework with municipalities that would oversee the system.

If enacted, the new enabling legislative framework for social housing would replace the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000, and eliminate redundant provisions tied to the transfer of housing programs which are no longer necessary. The legislation would streamline other sections to simplify administration.

The new legislation would provide opportunities for service managers to more effectively manage their portfolios. It would ensure appropriate accountability measures are in place to better respond to the needs of low-income households and the social housing sector, and it would create new opportunities for tenants to save money and to become more self-sufficient.

There was a need to increase local flexibility in the housing plan, and a key part of our strategy is to establish more local flexibility to deliver better housing services to our communities. Our strategy will be flexible and consider the diversity of communities of all sizes, be they urban, rural, in the north or the Far North, because different communities have different priorities and different needs. Ontario will work closely with municipalities to ensure that we meet the unique needs of diverse communities.

By establishing clear roles and responsibilities, and by measuring our progress, we will ensure that housing services are affordable and effective. Both municipalities and the province, through the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review, recognize that local solutions provide the best outcomes for those in housing need and that service managers have developed the capacity and experience to manage housing programs, services and supports.

In developing the long-term housing strategy, we have been working in close collaboration with our municipal partners, and their input has been instrumental in shaping this strategy.

Our proposed legislation would set out for the first time the provincial interest in relation to Ontario's system of housing and homelessness programs. The provincial interest would focus on achieving positive outcomes for individuals, families and communities through a co-ordinated, accountable system that treats people with respect and with dignity. It would recognize the role of municipal players, multiple players, in providing local housing and homelessness services.

Under our proposed legislation, service managers would be responsible for establishing a local vision for housing and for those homelessness services through the development of a multi-year local housing and homelessness plan. The requirement for these plans is a key element of our new accountability framework and is consistent with the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review.

It was recommended that communities engage in integrated human services planning. These plans would provide the foundation for consolidation of housing and homelessness programs. They would provide municipalities with more flexibility, enabling them to direct housing and homelessness resources more effectively to where they are needed most. They would ensure that planning for housing is done in a coordinated fashion with other local planning, such as land use planning, human services planning and infrastructure planning.

Our proposed legislation would require that local plans reflect provincial interests and be developed through consultation with the public. To enhance accountability, each service manager will be required to report on specific performance measures. These plans would guide local housing services for at least 10 years and would need to be reviewed at least every five years.

These changes would be rooted in a new partnership with municipalities, recognizing the critical role that municipalities have in delivering housing services to

Ontarians and allowing them to do their job more effectively.

I would like to briefly discuss a few other key elements of our strategy in the proposed legislation.

The new act would provide for the delivery of new, cost-effective services for the housing sector through an expanded mandate for the current Social Housing Services Corp. Under the proposed legislation, the Social Housing Services Corp. would be renamed the Housing Services Corp. It would continue to be an independent, non-profit organization, responsible for managing and administrating cost-effective goods and services to its members.

Currently, the corporation has a prescribed mandate in legislation. It is unable to offer new services to housing providers and social housing tenants. As part of our commitment to create stronger partnerships, this legislation would provide the Housing Services Corp. with an expanded mandate to also offer optional access to its services, as appropriate, to affordable and supportive housing providers and tenants. It would also be able to offer additional optional services and supports that will help tenants and housing providers, such as energy-efficiency initiatives, tenant property insurance and tenant financial education.

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I would also like to note that through enabling provisions in the proposed legislation, the Housing Services Corp. would work with service managers to pilot an asset-building program that would help tenants living in social housing to plan for their future and to become more self-sufficient. Tenants would save money for specific purposes, such as training and education, without reducing their rent-ceared-to-income assistance. This would potentially remove disincentives to seeking employment and education opportunities, and it would improve economic outcomes for low-income households.

We are also planning amendments to the Planning Act that would require municipalities to establish policies allowing second units in new and existing developments. This would provide more affordable options for lower-and moderate-income households and for elderly parents or live-in caregivers. These units can provide additional income for homeowners such as first-time homebuyers and would help them with their mortgage payments. A reference to affordable housing would be included in the matters of provincial interest in part II of the act, and the period of time for which a bylaw may authorize the temporary use of a garden suite would be increased from 10 years to 20 years.

These changes would further expand affordable housing opportunities. They would build on the range of planning and financial tools that are currently available to municipalities that encourage affordable housing, including property tax exemptions for municipal housing facilities, loans and grants, and establishing affordable housing targets through official plans.

Finally, the proposed legislation and our long-term strategy would help tenants in a number of other ways, a couple of which I will highlight. There will be a new

local and more independent review of certain decisions they feel are unfair and unreasonable. Housing providers would also have access to this review process.

Our government would continue to support victims of domestic violence by retaining the special priority policy that gives them priority on the social housing waiting list. We will also work with municipalities and housing providers to identify additional options to meet the needs of victims of domestic violence. Service managers would also be required to include a plan for housing special-priority-policy applicants as part of their comprehensive local housing and homelessness plans.

We have developed a strategy that will, in good and in lean economic times, achieve more with existing resources by retooling and enhancing the existing system so that it better meets the needs of the people it serves.

However, housing depends on adequate sustainable funding, and we need the federal government to make a long-term commitment. Unlike many industrialized countries, Canada has never had a national housing strategy or a housing framework. Currently, the federal funding for housing is short-term, program-specific and declines over time under specific agreements. That is why, with support from our municipal partners, the province continues to call upon the federal government to develop a housing framework based on a long, stable funding commitment.

We have often partnered with the federal government to ensure that Ontarians have more access to affordable housing throughout the province. But long-term sustainable funding is integral to the success of an affordable housing system that supports the need both today and tomorrow.

Our long-term strategy is an extension of Ontario's commitment to affordable housing. Over the past few years, our significant investments in affordable housing have helped hundreds of thousands of families and individuals in communities right across Ontario. In addition, Ontario invests approximately \$430 million in annual operating funding for housing and for homelessness services. These ongoing funds support important programs and services such as emergency hostels, supportive housing that provides additional assistance for people in need and the provincial rent bank, which has prevented more than 23,800 evictions to date.

This government understands that affordable housing opens doors to a better future, and that's why, despite significant global economic challenges, we have not removed a single penny of the funds earmarked for housing. Record investments notwithstanding, we heard from people across the province that Ontario can do better and we agreed.

We've made significant investments in the housing system, but we understand there is still more to be done. Our efforts to improve the housing system are ongoing and we will continue to work with our partners and our stakeholders moving forward, understanding that transforming the housing system is a long-term commitment.

I had the pleasure recently of spending some time with Neil Hetherington and Habitat for Humanity. One of the

most outstanding pieces of information that I received from him was that in the approximately 1,800 homes that have been built for families—typically, these are modest-income families in need or people who have no home—there is a 98% rate where the young people who now have stable housing have gone on to finish their high school education, but more importantly, have gone on to post-secondary education in one form or another; 98%. So that small piece of research tells us how important housing is to providing a stable life for our young people so that they, in turn, have a future, enabling them to get out of that circle of poverty; enabling them to dream like each of our children have over the years of what they can do, where they can go and who they can become. So housing is a really important part of the social fabric of Ontarians. It's an extraordinary part of the policy and the commitment of the Liberal government, our government, to move forward and say, "What is it that we can do, given our times, to make a difference in the lives of a lot of people?"

I started years ago with something called Beatrice House, when I discovered, in a really inadvertent way, that there were more than 1,000 homeless families on the streets in Toronto. I couldn't quite grasp that there were 1,000 homeless families. I'd heard of homeless people, of course; you see them on the street, and you knew about the shelters, but I'd never thought about the impact of children not having a place to rest, a place to eat, a place to go to school, a place they could call home. Having been a school trustee, I was well aware of the challenges of children who have had multiple places where they've stayed. Often their schooling fell apart because they tend to fall through the cracks. But I was overwhelmed by the fact that we had these folks on the street.

I was blessed to be able to work with Dr. Fraser Mustard and many others—the Honourable Margaret Norrie McCain—and to be part of a group who put together Beatrice House, which is now run by the YWCA in a former school in Toronto. Over the years, we've been able to provide for them—we being the people of Ontario, as well as social benefactors—an opportunity for children to have a place they can call home while their moms—typically, it's moms—get a better education, get social services support, have that envelope that supports them as they move forward and, ultimately, get a job, get back into society and provide that stability for their children. That's what housing is all about.

That's why we've made the kind of commitment we have. That's why we've listened to the people who are on the ground, making a difference day to day, as they told us the system we had in place was far too cumbersome, with too many rules, too many regulations and too many burdens that didn't enable them to have the flexibility that they needed. Whether they lived in Wawa or Cornwall or Windsor or Toronto, one size doesn't fit all. They needed to have that flexibility.

One of the other things we've forgotten about when we talk about homelessness is that we unfortunately also have homeless seniors. We have people who need social

housing as they grow older. They don't have a place to live. So we're looking at the whole spectrum. Homelessness is not just restricted to a particular age group; it can actually go across all Ontarians.

I know that each of us feels the same in that we want to do whatever it is we can to help those less fortunate. It's just part of who we are; I think it's in our DNA. We want to make a difference. I don't think there's anybody in this House who doesn't believe that there is a place for social housing in this province. The issue is, how do we work together effectively and efficiently with the providers, with the service managers, knowing our restrictions, to start a strategy? I say start a strategy that will take us to where we ultimately want to go, and that is to be able to provide adequate housing, adequate social housing, rent-gearied-to-income housing, supporting those people who just need a hand up for a little while till they get their feet on the ground and a job established. That's part of who we are and what we want to do.

Thank you very much for allowing me this opportunity to discuss the long-term housing strategy on behalf of the province of Ontario.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I agree with the member's final words regarding this House: It's what we all want. The fact of the matter is, this bill doesn't do it.

One of the main things that municipalities need and want, in order to manage properly not only their housing situation but also the rest of their municipal agenda—one thing that they do need is they need to know what kinds of monies they're getting from the provincial government on an ongoing basis, on a year-to-year basis, and this bill doesn't do it. It doesn't give them any assurance that there's any funding. Any funding that may come out of this bill is dependent on federal sharing, and that puts it in someone else's hands. There's no guarantee; there's not even an intelligent projection that the municipalities can do in order to determine how much money they're going to have to spend next year or the year after or down the road. You can't build a good prototype, you can't build a system, without knowing how it's going to be funded.

Although the words are good in this bill, and I'm sure it will have some support from the municipalities, because it does include allowing the municipalities—for any funds they do get, they can be flexible with those funds. They don't have to go into specific silos, which is good. It gives the municipalities some credit for having some intelligent people working there who can determine where they best need to put that money, because every municipality is different and you can't treat them all the same. So the municipalities will like that flexibility. But it doesn't give them any assurance of funds, or a formula for those funds, into the future, and that's too bad. I think the government missed an opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: To put it simply, not one of those thousand homeless families will find housing because of this. Not one person or family of the 140,000 families that are waiting for housing will find housing because of this. Not one of the 250,000 folk in Ontario who pay more than 50% of their income on rent will find any solace in this.

In fact, of the 485 housing stakeholders who consulted for over six months and submitted a thousand submissions, none of them are happy either. They asked for five distinct actions on behalf of this government. The government has failed on all five: no new units, not one; no money, not a dollar; no rent supplements—asked for by everyone; no inclusionary zoning provisions, or the ability for municipalities to get that, which is what the municipalities have asked for.

All this does—and it really only promises to do it; it doesn't actually do it—is simplify rent geared to income. That's the only actually positive step. And yes, it gets rid of some of the red tape.

This is a shameful, laughable attempt to placate those who have been calling for three years for a housing strategy. Four housing ministers we've seen come and go with this government, and again, we're not looking at one new unit, one new dollar. Guess what? In March 2011, the federal government is getting out of the business. The money is going to drop even further.

We're dealing with homelessness as a national disaster in the city of Toronto, the GTA, and this bill will do absolutely nothing to address that. That's the reality. The small, slight little changes they've made are simply that: an admission of ineffectiveness.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I would like to add a couple of minutes of my comments to the minister's and the parliamentary assistant's leadoff on this particular new piece of legislation.

I just want to go back a little bit and say that during the consultation process—I'm going to go back prior to the housing, to the poverty reduction strategy that the Premier put in place back in 2007-08; I was part of that group. We consulted not only across Ontario but across Canada and some places outside of Canada, and housing was always a big issue.

Fast-forward to the consultations that then Minister Watson initiated to come up with some strategy. We need to remember that housing was sort of handed out to the municipal sector very much in a straitjacket, with very little flexibility. So during the consultations that were initiated by then Minister Watson, I attended a number of them, and I had some of my own in my riding. One of the things that kept coming up over and over again is that it's not all about money all the time. Yes, money plays a big role in this. There's money that governments of all levels are investing in housing, but as most governments normally do, we form these boxes and not everybody fits into that box.

We talk about the homeless in the streets of Toronto who are sleeping on the sidewalks. In the communities

where I come from, there's not much of that, but there are people in Concession 21 of Brighton township who have no car, have no means of transportation, so we need to give the flexibility to those communities to do what they do best and be good providers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Seeing none, the honourable member for Etobicoke Centre has two minutes for her response.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to be able to stand, and I appreciate the comments that have come, but the fact of the matter is we're putting \$450 million annually into the programs dealing with housing and homes.

There's no question there is a deficit, but part of the deficit results from the fact that the previous government cancelled 17,000 units. That's a reality check. If you cancel it and you don't do anything for 10 years, obviously you are going to have a deficit, and we inherited that deficit. So we're going to try to do something about it.

I don't care which party is in power. We have a \$20-billion deficit that we need to deal with. What we have been able to do is find a way, working with the municipalities—remember the previous government downloaded to municipalities; we're uploading, working with them—trying to find solutions considering exactly what we've got to be able to work with.

I think it's particularly important that we met with the service managers, 47 of them, and asked them what it was that they needed to be able to provide the housing needs in their communities. The greatest thing they need is flexibility, and they needed the red tape to start the process of how to do this better, given the circumstances they are working in. And that we did. This bill actually provides a host of opportunities to start the process, recognizing that there is in fact more to do.

I think it's also important to say that we have 22,000 new units under way, \$1.2 billion worth of investment; overall, a \$2.3-billion investment this government has made into housing in this province. You can't take that away. That's exactly what we've been able to do. I think that shows our commitment on how we are going to move forward, but absolutely, given our reality, we are working within our means, which is exactly what every Ontarian would like us to do. I think that this is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm pleased to stand and begin my comments on Bill 140 this morning, an act that's called the Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act; the short title, of course, is the Housing Services Act.

I must say that this piece of legislation and the corresponding plan, Building Foundations: Building Futures, have been long awaited. They were promised seven years ago. They've been three years in the making, and given the great expectation, this is, by all accounts, a backtrack. 1000

I was more than surprised at the way this government chose to release these two documents. Let me just run

through the events of the past few days. On Monday, November 29, the government quietly, and definitely without any notice to my office as critic, released their long-term affordable housing plan, Building Foundations: Building Futures. Although the title indicates that the government is building, the plan doesn't propose to build any new housing developments. It doesn't provide any funding to a housing subsidy. It doesn't propose any new programs. Most importantly, it doesn't reduce the numbers on the current social housing waiting list.

After three years' time, I think we are safe to say that this report does not achieve the goals that it was expected to achieve. This government's affordable housing plan shows no initiative. There are no new real ideas and, as we have seen many times before, this plan, too, includes dependency on federal funding.

Obviously the government wasn't too proud of this long-awaited report because, in a ploy to distract from it, a few hours after the release of the report they introduced a massive, new, almost 100-page bill. Staying true to this government's way, the members opposite tried to ram this bill through by starting debate only two days after it was released, something that we appealed and were able to at least begin one day later.

The industry stakeholders weren't even able to get a copy of the bill until almost noon on Tuesday, almost a full day later. I will tell you that my office sent out copies of this piece of legislation to stakeholders, and they were anxiously waiting to see what the contents were and, more importantly, what it meant for them.

I want to talk a bit more about the government's so-called long-term affordable housing plan. The arrival of this long-anticipated report dates back to 2007. During the 2007 election campaign, the McGuinty government promised Ontarians an affordable housing strategy. The strategy was supposed to be a 10-year plan for affordable housing in Ontario. According to their 2007 platform, the strategy would contain a mix of non-profit and co-operative housing and would take advantage of creative financial options. The report was to be released this past spring. In fact, the former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the member from St. Catharines, promised to release the eagerly anticipated report by June 21 of this year. When he took over as minister at the beginning of the 2010 is when he made this promise.

As the members opposite know, the report was not released in the spring and it was postponed until now. At the time the delay was announced last spring, a ministry spokesman said: "The ministry was going to be working full tilt through the summer to get this very important plan correct."

I guess the three years they had wasn't enough and they had to cram for another few months. Well, this decision was very upsetting to many. Stakeholders were frustrated and disappointed. Ontarians were disappointed and particularly those 142,000 Ontarians on the current affordable housing wait list were very disenchanted.

Let me read a few comments of industry experts when they found out that the spring release date was going to

be delayed. Michael Shapcott, the director of affordable housing and social innovation at the Wellesley Institute and the co-chair of the Housing Network of Ontario said: "Poor housing is directly linked to poor health, and the delay in delivering and implementing a provincial affordable housing strategy will be costly to individuals, communities and the economy." Mr. Shapcott continued: "The Ontario government's failure to meet its own timeline underlines a concern raised by the provincial Auditor General that the housing ministry lacks the capacity to do its work. In its 2009-10 budget, the provincial government said it would match federal housing investments as a placeholder until its own housing strategy was in place. Ontario has missed the 2010-11 budget and risks losing the 2011-12 cycle as well—pushing back solutions for yet another year." This is called backtracking.

The Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, which represents more than 770 non-profit housing providers across this province, was also disappointed by the delay, especially since so many Ontarians are struggling to pay their rent.

Linda Coltman from Voices from the Street said, "With this delay I'm left to wonder just how important a priority is being placed upon the ideal of helping to have everyone at their best. For people like me living with the long-term effects of poverty, we aren't asking for a hand-out but simply to be afforded with real opportunities to develop our talents and abilities. We need a step up towards our goals of self-esteem and personal and community understanding of our pasts and our living conditions."

She also said, "My personal desire and expectation is to see great leadership from the province united with all orders of government, working with all sectors and especially with those of us living in poverty, to create opportunities, remove barriers and provide much-needed supports so that all Ontarians can live with dignity."

Yutaka Dirks, co-chair of the Housing Network of Ontario, said, "McGuinty made a promise to introduce a housing strategy to help reduce poverty, but this pause means another summer of hardship for hundreds of thousands of Ontarians facing inadequate and unaffordable housing."

I questioned this government on the delay of their housing report. First, they broke into uproarious laughter, and then refused—they refused—to answer the question, other than to tell me that "affordable housing is very important in the province of Ontario." But it wasn't important enough to release the report in the spring as promised, was it?

The minister talked about how this was a "very, very important issue" and how he was "very, very proud of the consultation" and "very, very proud" of the engagement, but he didn't say anything about the release of the report and what brought on the delay.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you that I was happy to hear the word "consultation" from the other side, as it is not something that we often hear or see happen. They have a long history of failed energy experiments as a result of

that—but that's for another day. And they have a long list of other failed initiatives.

What concerns me is that they didn't plan for the consultations to be finished and the report to be done by the planned date. They had three years; there was no need for a delay.

The minister said that his government was “ensuring that the long-term affordable housing strategy is a strategy that works for Ontarians.” Well, I’m afraid that this isn’t the plan that’s going to do that.

He said, “We’re about ensuring that we put a plan in place that is long-term ... and about ensuring that there is a housing strategy in place that works.”

Now the report has arrived and we have this new, large piece of legislation. Both the long-term affordable housing plan and the new piece of legislation will give service managers more flexibility, there’s no doubt about that. But I know that this is something that municipalities have been asking for for a long time, and they’re quite happy that they have finally received a mechanism that enables them to serve Ontarians more appropriately.

The government has actually acknowledged that one size doesn’t fit all, and that’s a good model to have for housing. Each of the service managers has different housing challenges, and as you can imagine, the challenges in the city of Toronto, for example, differ greatly from the challenges that are faced in the north and in other parts of the Golden Horseshoe.

1010

This piece of legislation and long-term affordable housing plan allow service managers the flexibility to use the funding for the five homelessness-related programs to best meet their own needs at home.

The current programs are as follows: First of all, there’s the consolidated homelessness prevention program. That has helped those experiencing or at risk of homelessness to find and maintain stable housing.

Then there’s the emergency energy fund program, which helps prevent homelessness by reducing the risk of householders being evicted due to energy arrears.

Then there’s the emergency hostels program, which provides for short-term lodging and a temporary personal needs allowance until an emergency situation is resolved.

We also have the domiciliary hostels program, which provides permanent housing with supports for vulnerable adults who require limited supervision and support with daily activities.

The last is the rent program, which provides outstanding rent directly to the landlords on behalf of tenants who, due to some emergency or other unforeseen circumstances, are in short-term arrears and facing eviction.

These five have been collapsed, and service managers are now able to use the money in whichever area they see fit.

Currently, these programs are allotted funding without any flexibility. This piece of legislation allows funding to flow from one program to another as the service managers see fit and if it serves their community’s needs.

I’m told that the idea is that instead of continuing to allocate money to each program separately, the ministry is working out a way to give one lump sum of funding to the service managers and then they will do the dividing. It will remain to be seen how this will work, and it is difficult to determine how long it will take before we even know if it works.

While service managers do get some flexibility with funding for these five programs, with this piece of legislation they have another responsibility. They’re also required to develop the 10-year affordable housing plan.

If this government was going to put the responsibility for the development of a housing plan on service managers, why did they wait three years to do that? This could have started three years ago. It was the responsibility of this government, a commitment that they made to develop the 10-year affordable housing plan. Then, lo and behold, they failed to develop a plan, and they have downloaded the responsibility to the service managers. As history has proven, when something goes wrong, the government will have someone else to blame. It won’t be their plan, after all.

Have they considered the administrative costs to the service managers to take on this risk? We asked whether service managers would be given any funding to offset these costs, and the answer was no. We asked if the development of these 10-year plans would increase municipal tax dollars, and the response we received was that this government isn’t requiring that property taxes go up; it would be up to the municipalities.

Well, municipalities don’t have any money either. They have nothing to ante up. Creating a plan will cost money, so, although not spoken, the government is requiring municipalities to put more tax dollars into the development of a plan that should have been their plan to develop.

This 10-year plan is quite complex. Expectations are that it establishes current and future housing needs, objectives and targets, the measures to meet the objectives and targets, and how progress will be measured. The plan is due in 2012, and it will be reviewed every five years.

We asked how service managers could be expected to develop a 10-year plan without knowing what sort of funding they’ll get. The answer was that the ministry would work with service managers as they develop their plan, and they would give them guidance as to future funding. They won’t give them funding, but they will give them guidance.

According to the ministry, municipalities won’t be required to invest money to achieve the plan targets, but they will have to show progress. How will that be done?

Would you like me to stop there?

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being 10:15, this House will stand in recess until 10:30, at which time we’ll have question period.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a number of constituents from Peterborough riding in the members' east gallery today. Ms. Janie Kelly and Mr. Dave Nickle are both teachers with the Kawartha and Pine Ridge District School Board in Peterborough. Ms. Kelly is also the president of the Peterborough OSSTF unit.

Also in the gallery today is Ms. Christina Crowley, a constituent of mine in Peterborough. She's employed with the Ministry of Government Services. I also welcome her on behalf of her minister, the Honourable Harinder Takhar.

Mr. Ted Arnott: On behalf of the member for Newmarket–Aurora, I would like to welcome representatives of the Salvation Army who are here today: Lieutenant Colonel Lee Graves, Lieutenant Colonel Ray Moulton, Major Pat Phinney, Major Neil Lewis, Captain John Murray and Captain Brenda Murray. Welcome.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: In the members' east gallery, please welcome two teachers from Sarnia representing the OSSTF: James Grant and Stephen Lynch.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I would like to also welcome two of my constituents, Shane Restall and Mary-Jane Karkheck, who are here with OSSTF from the great Avon Maitland District School Board.

Mr. Paul Miller: In the west gallery, I'd like to welcome Chris Watson, political liaison for CUPE, and two Hamiltonians, Michelle Hrushka and Lauren Marela; they're co-chairs of the Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability Benefits in Ontario.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: They're not here yet, but I want to welcome the students from Thomas Street Middle School. They're going to be performing at the visit of our 28th Governor General, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston's visit to Queen's Park at 2 o'clock.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I would like to introduce Kaley Ames from my riding of St. Paul's and her friend Tyler Golden, both of whom are joining us today to watch question period. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Dave Levac: Up in the west visitors' gallery is a very strong advocate for mental health issues and brain injury issues and a co-chair of the Drinking and Driving Countermeasures Committee in the riding of Brant, Mr. Lawrie Palk. Thank you for being here, Lawrie.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm especially delighted today to introduce to the Legislature a delegation from the People's Republic of China. They are from the Anhui province from the water resources department of Hefei City. They heard about our great policy on water resources and water safety. I'm delighted to introduce them to you: Mr. Cai, who is the deputy director; Mr. Huang, Mr. Zhou, Ms. Xu, Mr. Ji, and Mr. Zhao. Thank you very much for coming to Canada and seeing our water resources.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I would like to introduce two delegations that are with us today from the OSSTF, the

Kingston representatives Steve Newstead and David Mathers, who are here for lobby day at Queen's Park.

I'd also like to introduce two citizens from Kingston who are here to enjoy our hospitality here at Queen's Park today, Don Sinkinson and David Sinkinson.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to take the opportunity to welcome the honourable representatives of the OSSTF: Cindy Dubué, Barry Kelley, Cheryl Cavell, Barbara Hope, Julia Banks, Isabelle Cousineau, Dan Maxwell, Andrew Horwood, Carol Crocker, Susan Rab and James Wright. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is to the Minister of Tourism. Before the government appointed Fay Booker chair of the Niagara Parks Commission, she was a partner at the accounting firm Grant Thornton.

A record of decisions made at a September 21 meeting of the Niagara Parks Commission shows that Ms. Booker handed a five-year contract to none other than Grant Thornton to be the commission's external auditor. I'm told that Ms. Booker has said that the price was not the determining factor in her decision to hand the sweetheart deal to her former firm.

Why would she say that?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question, and thank you for the opportunity to talk about the Niagara Parks Commission. There's important progress under way. We are moving forward with audits. We have a new chair in place. We have a new vice-chair in place. They are helping us to move the commission forward. They are experienced and knowledgeable. These individuals are determined to bring greater accountability and greater transparency. We are on the right track.

The agency has a responsibility to all Ontarians to be more transparent and to be more accountable. We are working hard on behalf of all Ontarians to make the commission accountable and transparent.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question was about a contract. The external auditor was supposed to be chosen through a competitive bidding process run by Fay Booker, but Ms. Booker departed from the usual procurement practices and standards and brought in the three lowest bidders for interviews. These interviews were conducted without the full commission present or even being informed.

Then Ms. Booker handpicked her former firm over a bid that was the lowest in price and another from the incumbent. So if incumbency didn't matter, as Ms. Booker has said, and if price didn't matter either, then what did matter in her decision to unilaterally hand a sweetheart contract to her former firm?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much, again, for the question. As I said, we have a chair at the commission who is steering the commission in the right direction. That individual brings significant experience—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew. Interjections at all times are not helpful, but it's certainly not helpful when he's not in his seat.

Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: That individual will bring significant experience in auditing and in corporate governance.

The commission is making significant progress. The commission has redefined the governance structure for board committees. The commission has developed a new code of conduct for the board and employees. The commission is consulting with residents in Niagara region through public meetings.

We are on a new direction; we are going to continue that. The commission is vital to Ontario's future: to build on our strengths, to build on tourism and to build on our economy for a stronger and more prosperous Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Again, the question is about a contract and the minister's answer was not.

Fay Booker is the minister's handpicked appointee to clean up after a previous purge at the Niagara Parks Commission following the Maid of the Mist boondoggle. Minister Chan has repeatedly said he has confidence in her to change the culture and make the commission more accountable and transparent—he said it again today—yet she sole-sourced a \$500,000 printing contract and bypassed a competitive bidding process to hand a sweetheart deal to her friends at her former firm.

The rules of the commission require that members disclose conflicts of interest and take no part in decisions involving friends, family or personal interests. The meeting records show that she did neither. How can Minister Chan say he has full confidence in Fay Booker now that he knows she's been caught breaking the rules for her friends?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question again.

Let me say this: The honourable member is wrong. Let me repeat again: The honourable member is wrong. There was a competitive process.

Our government is taking a responsible approach to address concerns that have been raised. There are currently audits under way. The audits cover everything from procurement practices to expenses at the commission. These audits are carried out by the finance audit team—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Simcoe North, member from Haldimand, member from Oxford, member from Halton, member from Renfrew, member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Minister?

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Hon. Michael Chan: The audit covers everything from procurement practices to expenses at the commission. These audits are carried out by our finance audit team. The audit team brings the utmost in experience and quality as they take on this important work on behalf of Ontarians.

I have full faith in the Ministry of Finance's objectivity and expertise. We are moving forward with a plan that will strengthen the commission. We are moving forward with a plan that will make it more transparent and accountable to all Ontarians.

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

Mr. Ted Arnott: My second question is also to the Minister of Tourism. At a time of record deficits and debt, the Premier is asking Ontario families to make sacrifices, but it gets worse. How does the minister justify Fay Booker's zealous effort to increase compensation for herself and members of the Niagara Parks Commission?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much again for the question. Tourism is an economic driver of Ontario. It contributes over \$20 billion to our economy, generating 300,000 jobs. Niagara Falls is one of Canada's—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

Hon. Michael Chan: Niagara Falls is one of Canada's most important tourism attractions. We must steer the Niagara Parks Commission in a new direction. This is why we have appointed a new chair. This is why, since the appointment, we have seen a redefined governance structure for board committees and the development of a new code of conduct. But the changes do not stop here. We are seeing changes in the way the board reviews and approves the chair's expenses, consultations with individuals across—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm not sure if the minister is hearing my questions because he has yet to address any of the specific issues that I've raised.

Our PC caucus found a record of an October 5 Niagara Parks Commission meeting in which Fay Booker pushed to double her per diem. The minister is on record several times in this assembly—I think he's on record now 12 times—and in media reports, expressing full confidence in Ms. Booker and asserting that she will help change the culture and practices at the Niagara Parks Commission. The records we uncovered, however, suggest that Ms. Booker is more interested in helping herself double her pay.

How can Minister Chan still say that he has full confidence in Fay Booker now that he knows she's been caught breaking the rules for her friends and herself?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question. I said it before, but let me repeat it again: The honourable member was wrong. There was an RFP; it was a com-

petitive process. There is important progress under way. We have a new chair in place—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Renfrew. It's not helpful from the member from Hamilton East as well.

Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: Now with a new chair and a new vice-chair, we are moving forward with the Niagara Parks Commission. They are individuals who are determined to bring greater accountability and greater transparency. We are on the right track and moving ahead. The agency has a responsibility to all Ontarians. We are working very, very hard on behalf of all Ontarians to make the commission accountable and transparent.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Again, I asked the minister about Fay Booker's pay. The Auditor General will release a new annual report on Monday, but it appears that the McGuinty Liberals have yet to fix the eHealth-style mess the auditor uncovered there two years ago. In eHealth, Sarah Kramer was the Premier's hand-picked appointee who was fired for handing out sweetheart deals to her friends, approving sole-source contracts handed out by others at eHealth and breaking the rules to pay herself a bonus.

Fay Booker is the minister's hand-picked appointee who, within months of being on the job, handed out a sweetheart deal to friends at her former firm, approved a half-million-dollar sole-source contract and tried to pay herself more.

Before the Premier fired Sarah Kramer, he and his health minister used to express confidence in her. Would the minister now say he has confidence in Fay Booker that is greater, the same or less than what they had in Ms. Kramer?

Hon. Michael Chan: I said it before, I repeated that before and let me repeat it one more time: The honourable member is wrong. There was an RFP. It was a competitive process.

Audits are under way. This audit will be undertaken by the Ministry of Finance audit team. They will look at everything. They will look at everything from travel, meals and hospitality expenses to procurement practices. Come January, there will be a plan in place for forensic audits by third parties.

We have a chair that is helping us move the commission forward, one that is experienced and knowledgeable in governance and auditing. We are taking action to move this commission forward and restore public confidence in this very important government agency.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. We're hearing from more and more families across Ontario who are worried about paying the bills. Beverly Soranno from Mississauga writes: "I am a single parent

living from paycheque to paycheque and I have just become aware of a 46% increase in hydro over the next few years. My salary is not increased to offset this amount."

Interjections.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm sorry, Speaker. They're calling this woman a liar; I'm quoting directly from her: "My salary is not increased to offset this amount. Where does one find the money?"

That's a good question. That's exactly my question to this Premier. Where will Ms. Soranno and people like her find the money?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question. It's an opportunity again to speak directly to Ontarians about our long-term energy plan.

First of all, I want to reassure them that we in fact have one; the opposition parties do not. Secondly, I want to say that it's devoted to ensuring that Ontario families have access to clean air, new jobs and reliable electricity.

Beyond that, there's been some great news this week that speaks directly to that jobs matter. Just yesterday in Windsor, there was a great announcement there attended by my colleagues on my right and my left here. We've opened up a wind tower manufacturing plant. It is 300 new full-time jobs, up to 400 construction and service jobs. The plant will use 100% Ontario steel; that's 200,000 tonnes of domestic steel with a value of \$140 million. I think that's good news for all families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Keeping the house warm and the lights on is becoming a lot more expensive and so is driving to work in the morning. In fact, gas prices shot up over 4 cents a litre across Ontario last night and they're heading towards \$1.20 a litre by the holidays, all compounded by the Premier's HST. Where are people supposed to find the extra money to pay the bills?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague and Ontarians as well about the desperate state we found ourselves in in past years when it comes to electricity. The IESO—consider them the watchdog for electricity—issued 19 public appeals in 2002 and 2003 alone, warning Ontarians to lower their electricity demands. In 2010, after all the work we have done together with Ontarians, after one of the hottest summers in recent memory, the IESO said Ontario is "in the best supply situation in a decade as a result of the new generation and transmission"—infrastructure—"added over the past five years."

We recognize that there are real costs associated with this massive investment in new generation and new transmission. That's why we've said we're going ahead with our clean energy benefit. It's a 10% reduction in all electricity bills during the course of the next five years and that speaks directly to the needs raised by my honourable colleague.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Incomes are not going up, but thanks to this Premier the bills are. Tracy King's husband

lost his job. A mother of two, she's working as much as she can to support her family. In fact, she's got two jobs, but they're barely scraping by on her minimum wages. She writes: "How do you afford to feed, clothe and pay utilities that just keep increasing? Not to mention the humiliation that is experienced when you inform your children that there will be no Christmas because of the economy."

How are people like Ms. King and her family going to get by?

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague made reference to a family which has suffered a job loss. I think one of the most important things that we can do for our families is ensure they have access to good, well-paying jobs. I want to tell you a little bit about our long-term energy plan and the good influence it's been having in that regard.

My honourable colleague knows that in Hamilton, three weeks ago, we announced 300 clean energy jobs. A few days ago in Cambridge, we announced—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew was interjecting so much that he did not hear the Speaker warning him.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Finance.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: In Hamilton two weeks ago, we announced 300 green energy jobs. A few days ago in Cambridge, it was 150. Two days ago in Essex county, it was 126. Yesterday in Windsor, it was 400 construction jobs, 300 full-time jobs. Today in Tillsonburg, it's 300 jobs, plus 600 construction jobs.

Every single day, we're creating more jobs as a result of our long-term energy policy. We think that's what families want to hear.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. Families facing uncertain times need to know affordable, reliable health care is there when they need it.

While this government asks people to pay more than ever before, they keep seeing cuts to their local hospitals. Documents from the Ontario Physiotherapy Association show that, since 2008, 27 hospital outpatient physiotherapy clinics have been gutted.

My question is, can the Premier explain to families in these 27 communities why the cuts just keep coming?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think, by any objective measure, health care just keeps getting better in the province of Ontario.

We're not laying any claim to perfection, but I can say, for example, that we're building 18 new hospitals. We've hired 10,000 more nurses. We've hired 2,900 more doctors. One million more Ontarians now have access to a family doctor. Wait times are down in every-

thing from MRIs to CTs to cataracts to cancer care to cardiac care to hip and knee surgery.

The fact of the matter is, by any objective assessment, health care is getting better. There's always more work to be done, and we look forward to doing that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I don't know who the Premier is talking to, but the people who I'm talking to are telling me they're frustrated. They're constantly asked to pay more, and they see that the money is being spent on everything from corporate tax cuts to consultant vacations in Japan.

When these hospital services are gutted, people are forced to pay for physiotherapy out of their own pocket, leaving many to simply go without physiotherapy.

Why is the McGuinty government cutting preventive health care, a decision that will ultimately drive up health care costs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to be very direct to that question: We're not. We're not cutting that. The fact of the matter is we continue to make tremendous new investments in health care in Ontario.

I'm just going to repeat: One million more people have a family doctor. More than five million Ontarians now have an electronic medical record. We're tracking wait times, and surgery wait times are down. Over 10,000 new nurses have been hired. There are 8,384 new long-term-care beds. We're building 18 new hospitals. We cut the price of generic drugs in half, and that's especially important for the one-million-plus Ontarians who are paying for those generic drugs out of pocket.

Again, there's always more work to be done, but I want to reassure my honourable colleague and the people of Ontario that we continue to invest more, not less. We continue to get more and not less.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: When this government introduced their family health teams, physiotherapy was supposed to be part of this primary care model. Yet today, not a single family health team has received funding for physiotherapy.

For elderly people, access to physiotherapy prevents falls and increases their quality of life. Physiotherapy is essential when you break a bone, when you're in chronic pain or when you experience an injury. Yet today, Ontario is rapidly losing access to these services.

Is the Premier finally ready to re-evaluate his government's faulty model or will Ontarians continue to suffer from inadequate access to physiotherapy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm just being provided information on the fly here, Speaker, by my very capable Minister of Health.

I just want to say we're very proud of the fact that we've put in place 200 family health teams. They are wonderful new creations. They've taken on, so far, some three million Ontario patients; many of those had no access to family health care before.

They are an interdisciplinary model, which means, basically, from a patient's perspective, it's one-stop shopping. You can see a doctor, a nurse practitioner, a nurse, a nutritionist, a counsellor, and some of those have in fact hired on physiotherapists. We're now providing, by the way, on the physiotherapy front, through OHIP, OHIP-funded physiotherapy to approximately 138,000 seniors annually.

Again, we're making progress; there's more to be done, and we aim to do it.

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

Mr. Peter Shurman: Again, to the Minister of Tourism, and we'll keep questioning Minister Chan until he gives us a proper answer.

In addition to handpicking friends at her former firm to provide so-called external oversight of the Niagara Parks Commission, Fay Booker ensured a friend was handed the contract to oversee the competition for boat tours at Niagara Falls. The sweetheart deal was worth \$50,000 and was handed to Peter Van Kessel, a consultant and friend of hers from Burlington.

How can you still have full confidence in Fay Booker?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question again. Let me repeat: That went through a competitive process, and the honourable member is wrong.

Chair Fay Booker is a strong asset for the commission. She brings extensive experience in corporate governance, accounting and auditing to her position. Chair Booker has already addressed these allegations and set the record straight in the Niagara Falls Review. She has my full confidence and support to take all the necessary action to bring greater accountability and transparency to the Niagara Parks Commission.

Since her appointment earlier this year, Chair Booker has initiated a number of important changes to processes at the commission. These changes will lead to a more open and transparent organization that will instill public confidence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I think you'd better be expanding that accountability act.

At an October 12 meeting, the Niagara Parks Commission learned that Mr. Van Kessel went over budget. Following in step with another mistake from eHealth, Ms. Booker and the commission simply hiked the \$50,000 ceiling for his consulting services.

The Ontario PC caucus tried to warn you about Fay Booker when you were appointing her earlier this year. At the public appointments committee hearings, we told you her ties to Burlington would be a problem, as would her ties to the Liberal Party. You didn't listen, and now either her governance style or Liberal pedigree has allowed eHealth-style rot to spread deeper into the Niagara Parks Commission.

Is the only way to deal with the rot and cronyism to change government?

Hon. Michael Chan: Our government is very, very committed and serious about openness in governance. Our government is taking a responsible approach to address the concerns that have been raised, and there are currently audits under way. The audits cover everything from procurement practices to expenses at the commission. These audits are carried out by our finance audit team. The audit team brings the utmost in experience and quality as they take on this important work on behalf of all Ontarians. I have full confidence in the ministry's financial objectivity and expertise.

We are moving forward with the Niagara Parks Commission.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. Toronto families have been waiting patiently for improved public transit so that the morning commute to work and school doesn't take so long and so they can get home in the evening to enjoy dinner together.

Fifteen years ago, these families saw a previous provincial government kill Eglinton transit. Is the Premier going to subserviently sit back and let the same thing happen under his watch?

1100

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite knows that we have been strong advocates for public transit and that we have made an investment in public transit that is the biggest investment in a generation, and we want to see that plan go forward.

But the reality is that the local democratic process has taken place in the city of Toronto. A new council and a new mayor have been elected, and I think that the member opposite would understand that that council and that mayor have to have an opportunity to talk about what they would like to present as a go-forward position. Obviously, we are very concerned if there is to be waste—there's money that has been invested in the current projects—but the council has to determine what it would like to present as its go-forward plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The Premier is from Ottawa, so he is familiar with the impact of scuttled transit plans. Families there waited and waited while governments dithered and change their minds. Here in Toronto, we are bracing for the same. Hundreds of Thunder Bay workers and their families are being left to twist in the wind, wondering if they'll have work. When can people in Toronto and Thunder Bay expect the Premier to show some backbone and finally get better public transit built, in particular on Eglinton Avenue?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite has consistently stood in this House and advocated against the air-rail link from Union Station to Pearson airport. The member opposite's seatmate was the former mayor of East York. He stood in the House yesterday and

argued against local democracy. I can remember a time when the Conservatives were in power in this province. I did a TV show with the member from Beaches—East York, and he made a very strong argument for honouring council's decisions and honouring the mayors that were duly elected.

We are very committed to public transit. We have made billions of dollars of investments and we want to see the plan go forward, but we are going to continue to work with the elected representatives of the city of Toronto and the entire region of the GTHA.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, while action to address pollution is a global effort, residents in my riding are doing simple things around the house and in their community to conserve energy, like buying programmable thermostats, taking public transit and turning off the lights. We have one of the highest public transit usages in the city of Ottawa at over 30%.

They know this saves them money on their energy bills and helps protect the environment, but they also want to see the McGuinty government continue its leadership in developing policies—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): To the Minister of Consumer Services, the Minister of Transportation and the honourable member for Trinity—Spadina: Take it outside. There's a question being asked.

Please continue.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Speaker.

They also want to see the McGuinty government continue its leadership in developing policies that conserve energy and reduce emissions.

Minister, my question is simple: Is conservation still part of the government's energy mix to protect the air we breathe?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Absolutely, because the McGuinty government understands that we need to have a sustainable environment and a sustainable economy. As the economy recovers from the global recession, we expect that companies will see the economic and environmental benefits of investing in new technologies to help them conserve and reduce their costs. In the meantime, the McGuinty government's conservation efforts have already saved some 1,700 megawatts over the last five years alone. That's like taking the entire city of Scarborough off the grid. I'm pleased to say that in our recently released long-term energy plan, we have committed to an ambitious target of some 7,100 megawatts of energy conservation by 2030.

The focus on energy conservation will remain. Our focus on making sure that we have reliable sources of energy, clean sources of energy—I want you to know that the best thing is not to flip on the light, but if you do, it's reliable and it's clean.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: That's certainly good news. I'm confident that my residents' practical conservation actions around the House and this government's commitment to conservation will make sure we have cleaner air to breathe and jobs for our children.

But conservation is only one part of the supply mix. While my constituents in Ottawa—Orléans are committed to ensuring a cleaner Ontario, they are concerned about going back to failed energy policies of the previous government. While it is clear that wind, solar, hydro and nuclear are the better alternatives to coal, I think you can agree that actions speak louder than words.

Minister, with many Tory members suggesting that clean coal is the way to go, will the McGuinty government really eliminate coal from our energy mix?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Let's be clear: On this side of the House, we believe that clean coal is an oxymoron. As Gideon Forman of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment wrote, "Burning coal always creates poisons. There is simply no getting around this. Hence the danger in fossil fuel combustion is intrinsic—the technology cannot be made safe."

Coal plants emit lead; mercury; dioxins; chromium; arsenic, which is a carcinogen; nitrogen oxide; and sulphur dioxide, which causes acid rain. Those are the scientific facts. I don't want that getting into our air, and neither do Ontario families. That's why our reliance on dirty coal so far is down 70% and we're driving it down to 0% by 2014 and closing down those dirty coal-fired plants.

We'll continue to conserve energy, but it's important when we flip on the lights that the source of that energy is intrinsically clean.

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Tourism. For several years the minister's parliamentary assistant, the member for Niagara Falls, was aware of the problems at the Niagara Parks Commission. Former commission member Italia Gilberti even brought her concerns about Fay Booker, the chair, to his doorstep, and by extension, to the minister's doorstep. Everything Ms. Gilberti has said to the media about Fay Booker is backed up by the commission's own records, yet the minister and the parliamentary assistant just tried to sweep the whole mess under the rug. In fact, the member for Niagara Falls told Ms. Gilberti to keep her head down and she would be given another three-year appointment.

Does Minister Chan think it is acceptable for his parliamentary assistant to be doling out public appointments just to buy someone's secrecy?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You are impugning motive, and I'd ask that you withdraw that last comment, please.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question.

Our government is committed to transparency and openness. As I said before, there is an audit process currently under way. This audit will be undertaken by the Ministry of Finance. They will look at everything from meals to travel and hospitality expenses to procurement practices. Also, come January, there will be a plan in place to conduct a forensic audit by a third party.

We have a chair who is helping us to move forward, one who is experienced and knowledgeable in governance and auditing. We are taking action to move this commission in a new direction to restore public confidence in this important agency.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Even with all the proof that the new chair, Fay Booker, can't fix a culture she is a part of, the minister sticks by her as his choice to change the culture of the Niagara Parks Commission.

The parliamentary assistant, the member for Niagara Falls, said of the first wave of scandalous spending, "This is devastating to me. The taxpayer has to know that ... money is being spent wisely."

Well, the parliamentary assistant must have given that quote on the golf course, because freedom-of-information records reveal that he took advantage of 158 rounds of free golf on Niagara Parks Commission courses in recent years. In fact, he arranged for 506 people to play rounds of golf for free, in addition to his free golf.

Minister, did your parliamentary assistant give a reason why he didn't tell you about the problems at the commission, or do you think he said nothing so that he could keep his free golf?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much, again, for the question.

We have a chair at the commission who is steering the commission in a new direction, and the commission is making significant progress. The commission has redefined the governance structure for board committees. The commission has developed a new code of conduct for boards and employees. The commission is consulting with residents in Niagara region in full public meetings.

We are moving ahead. We are going to continue building. The commission is vital to Ontario's future, to build on our strengths, to build on tourism and to build on our economy for a stronger Ontario.

1110

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the finance minister. Before the last election, the Premier said, "The downloading of [social assistance] programs stands as one of the worst misjudgements of the previous government." He went on to say, "They've been a burden to every municipality and we're taking them back in full."

The community and social services website clearly indicates that the province will pay half the administration costs for Ontario Works. My question is: Why is the government refusing to pay the outstanding \$53.7-million

share of welfare administration costs to the city of Toronto?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I welcome the question. Yes, we're very proud that we are uploading the total cost of OW. We're very proud of what we've done to upload the cost of public health. We're very proud of what we've done to upload the cost of ODSP and the obvious savings that will afford municipalities so they can in turn invest that money in important municipal services. We're very proud that we signed the provincial-municipal service delivery review and especially proud that even in spite of the enormous challenges to our books, we are continuing to implement that in its entirety, according to the timelines that were laid out and agreed to.

This government is all about that. It's about respecting municipal property taxpayers, it's about working with our municipal partners. I remain confident that the approach we're taking is the right one for our municipalities and certainly the right one for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: With all that was said by the finance minister, he never once said that he will honour the government's commitment to pay the \$53.7 million that is outstanding.

As far back as last February, the city of Toronto, in its analyst briefing notes, set out what was expected to come from the provincial government. Now, the provincial government is challenging that and they're saying they're not going to pay.

The government had an agreement with the outgoing city council to cover half of the administrative costs of Ontario Works for 2010. It is failing to honour that agreement. There is a new council in place and they need to know whether or not that money is forthcoming.

Will the minister put an end to the government's foot-dragging now and pay the full \$53 million that this government owes to the city of Toronto?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This year, right here in Toronto, we have already uploaded \$136 million. For that member's constituents, it means lower property taxes, it means better public services and it means access to better public services. That's what it's all about.

We are currently discussing with Toronto the accurate amount of costs associated with that. As I indicated publicly, we remain committed. We have meetings going on as we speak, and I look forward to a satisfactory resolution for all people with respect to this. I only wish you and your party had supported us as we lowered property taxes for Torontonians.

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, everybody knows that Ontario's roads rank among the safest in North America. This is due to some of the very important initiatives the government has taken recently, like the requirement of a zero blood alcohol concentration for drivers 21 years of age and under; and also the graduated licences.

Despite all these initiatives, we still have a lot of things to do in order to make sure the people of Ontario drive safe. I was reading the other day that statistics show that three quarters of drivers who have their licences suspended are still driving in the province of Ontario, which causes a lot of harm for many people across the province.

Can you tell us, Minister, what you are going to do to deal with this very important issue and to make sure all the people who are suspended cannot drive in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The reality is that there are too many people who have their driver's licence suspended who still get in their cars and drive, so we believe that we need to take strong action. Starting yesterday, December 1, if someone is caught driving with a suspended licence due to a serious Highway Traffic Act violation, or for chronic non-payment of family support, or with a blood alcohol level of over 0.08, or if they're supposed to have an ignition interlock and they don't—in any one of those situations, their car can now be impounded at the side of the road for seven days.

People who choose to drive with a suspended licence or who have been caught with their blood alcohol over the legal limit are breaking the law. We believe there needs to be a serious deterrent in place. These new penalties will help get people off the road who should not be driving because they're drivers' licences have been suspended.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Minister. Over the past week, I've received many calls to my constituency office in London—Fanshawe asking about the announcement as it relates to the Family Responsibility Office and individuals paying family support. At the end of the day, we need to make sure money that is rightfully owed to children and their families gets to them. However, impounding someone's car for being late or missing one payment is not acceptable, Minister.

Can you tell me how you can deal with this and when the responsibility office can exercise that right? Can you explain this to my constituents and my people, because they ask me on a regular basis?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you very much—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm too quick this morning.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: She's eager.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Yes.

First of all, let me say that vehicles will only be impounded from people driving illegally because their licence has been suspended.

FRO initiates a driver's licence suspension because the payer is continually in arrears in their family support, not that they missed one payment.

Our first priority is getting the money owed to the children and families. We've suspended over 31,000

drivers' licences since 2003, which resulted in \$665 million getting to families.

Just yesterday, the Leader of the Opposition said that more needed to be done at FRO. Our government has increased funding to FRO by 51% since 2003—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. On November 1 this year, the Minister of Energy seemed confused when asked a direct question from Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak regarding your \$53-million hidden hydro tax and a possible similar tax to be levied on natural gas customers. The very next day, he said no taxes would be imposed and that the \$53-million backdoor energy tax grab, also known as the special purposes fund, would be gone. The minister didn't keep his word, and your Attorney General continued to defend your power to collect these hidden taxes.

I know you're trying to confuse Ontario families, so how about keeping your word on this one? Stand in your place, do the right thing and repeal section 26.1 of the Ontario Energy Board Act. Assure Ontario families that the backdoor energy tax will be gone and that you will no longer be able to impose new ones. Will you do that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think my honourable colleague is talking about our effort to support conservation programs in Ontario. I will happily contrast our long-term energy plan with their absence of any plan. I'll also happily contrast our record when it comes to promoting conservation with their record, where they didn't promote conservation at all.

They tell us that Ontarians are not interested in conservation, but when we put forward our home energy savings program, almost 400,000 Ontario families took advantage of the audit program; 250,000 have then helped themselves with our energy savings and retrofits program.

They're against conservation programs. We understand that. We put something out before the people of Ontario, and 400,000 said, "Where can we sign on?"

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, families will try anything to get some relief from the burden that you're inflicting on them with your hydro policies. Families and electricity consumers in this province cannot—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The Minister—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Judge not.

The Minister of Agriculture will please come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Finance.

Please continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Families and electricity consumers in this province simply cannot afford your increases to the cost of hydro. The Minister of Energy said he'd be doing away with the \$53-million tax, but it's still on the books.

Premier, if you can't stand in your place and say the right thing and do the right thing, I'm going to help you. Today, I will be introducing a bill that, if passed, will remove section 26.1 of the Ontario Energy Board Act, thereby giving Ontario families a break, the break they so badly need.

Premier, this is a bill that can help Ontario families. Will you support it?

1120

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think I felt a disturbance in the Force. I think there may be an inkling of some kind of a proposal put forward by a representative of the Conservative Party, and we look forward to seeing that.

But let me tell you again, they have no energy plan. They claim that they're on the side of ratepayers who are concerned, legitimately, about costs going up. Yesterday, they had a very clear opportunity to stand up in favour of families, farmers and small businesses when we voted on our clean energy benefit, which will reduce electricity bills by 10% over the course of the next five years. When presented with a very specific opportunity to stand up in favour of people who are concerned about rates, they voted against that.

Not only do they not have a plan they can put before the people of Ontario, but when it comes to seizing an opportunity to help families, farmers and small businesses, they said no.

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The Premier is not answering questions in this Legislature about the revelations of financial improprieties at the Niagara Parks Commission, even though it's clear that he personally is no stranger to the issue. At least one Niagara Parks commissioner received a letter from the Premier, congratulating him on a job well done, a few weeks before he was fired.

Why won't the Premier call in the Auditor General to investigate allegations of wrongdoings at the Niagara Parks Commission?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question. We must steer the Niagara Parks Commission in a new direction. This is why we appointed a new chair back in April of this year. This is why, in June of this year, we appointed a new vice-chair. Since the appointments, we have seen a redefined governance structure in both committees, and development of a new code of conduct.

But the changes do not stop here. We are seeing changes in the way—consultations with individuals across the Niagara region, through public meetings; restructur-

ing the commission's operations; and implementation of the recommendations from the governance review.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Judging by the Premier's refusal to answer the question and the minister's response, I'll take it that the answer is no.

Families are tired of hearing about scandal at this public organization, an organization with an important public mandate. Today's Globe and Mail quotes a former senior bureaucrat, saying the internal government audit is "unacceptable" and "a conflict of interest."

Today, New Democrats are sending a letter to the Auditor General, asking specifically for his office to open up an investigation. Will we have the Premier's support on this effort?

Hon. Michael Chan: The leader of the third party is chasing allegations, not facts. Let me quote from the honourable member: "The forgery allegation... should be forwarded to the police."

The audit relating to that allegation found no forgery. The leader of the third party is riding on unfounded allegations. The member is dead wrong, and the individual raising that concern is also dead wrong. Instead of chasing false allegations, the member should focus on the facts. The member should focus on the findings.

We have a plan to move forward and build a stronger Niagara Parks Commission. We are focused on getting to the bottom of the matter. This is why we are moving forward with audits of expenses and procurements.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Today marks an important day in my community of Peterborough and many other communities, not only in Ontario but around the world. Today is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Communities everywhere are celebrating with events and promoting the need to empower people with disabilities.

There are many individuals in my community who once resided in a provincially run institution. I, like many others, was proud to be part of the latest institution closing here in Ontario.

What must we do to continue to improve the lives of those with disabilities in communities throughout the great province of Ontario?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merci au membre de Peterborough for his question. I know that he was very supportive in helping us to close the institution.

Today, I invite all members to join me in recognizing the contributions that people with disabilities bring to our community. Proudly, Ontario is making a positive difference in many ways. In 2004, we decided to overhaul our developmental services system, a transformation that responds to a need for services and supports that will allow people with developmental disabilities to achieve their goals and enjoy a real sense of belonging.

Today, we are going beyond traditional ways of supporting individuals with developmental disabilities by encouraging a range of opportunities that will help them connect with their communities. This approach encourages families to stay together and provides the opportunity for people with developmental disabilities to build meaningful partnerships in their own communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I believe, too, that by working together, we can foster a society that will be both inclusive and empowering to those with disabilities. Clearly, our government has taken the right steps in creating this.

It appears that by 2031, almost 50% of Ontarians will have some kind of disability, and for the first time, people older than 55 will outnumber children aged zero to 14.

What can we tell those 1.85 million people in Ontario who have a disability about what this government is doing to improve accessibility and promote opportunity for people with disabilities?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: In 2005, our government passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, with the full support of every member in this House.

As baby boomers grow older, their demand for accessible services in all areas of everyday life will increase.

This year, the broader public sector met their requirements under the first accessibility standard for customer service. In 2012, the private and not-for-profit sector will follow. This past fall, my ministry put forward our integrated accessibility regulation for public review, and we received over 100 comments. We are reviewing these comments and look forward to presenting the integrated regulation in the new year.

I'm proud to say that our province will become a leader in accessibility. Other provinces and jurisdictions around the world—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Minister, your auto insurance reforms aren't working. You offered consumers a choice: Pay the most for the least, and you did nothing to tackle the real fraud in the system. We hear that the industry is applying for rate increases as we speak.

Minister, medical rehab costs are a big part of the problem, and the only way to be sure that legitimate assessments are being undertaken is to put health care practitioners—doctors—back into the equation. In fact, FSCO advised you to do this. Why did you not take FSCO's advice?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Actually, the number of people, according to the Insurance Brokers Association, accessing consumer choice has gone up in some instances by 25%.

I had a chance to meet with leading representatives of the industry, who report that the new policy, the new plan,

is starting to work, and they're optimistic that it will help keep rates down for consumers. For seven years we have done that. We replaced a government that allowed rates to go up—I think it was 40%—when they were there.

We're fighting fraud. We're working with consumers. We're building a new system that will give greater protection to all Ontarians at a fair price. I look forward to working with the insurance industry and with consumer groups to continue to build on the progress we've made in the last seven years, and I welcome the support of the opposition—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Back to the minister: The people out there paying the bills disagree with you. Listen to what one of them has to say:

"Mr. Miller, I want to point out that my car insurance has gone up almost 30%, while my coverage has been decreased by 50%. What can I, as a citizen, do to express my shock?"

"A letter I received from my insurers tells me the Ontario government allowed these increases. Along with the increased taxes due to HST being spread to many new items, my spending dollar is less and less. You can be sure that as a senior citizen my income is not going up to match this."

1130

Minister, with your auto insurance reforms, people are paying more and getting less. When are Ontario drivers going to find some real relief?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I welcome the opportunity to continue to build on our success of keeping the rate of growth in automobile insurance premiums to among the lowest in the country.

No doubt some people will see rising premiums. It's difficult when the member refuses and has a secret letter and he won't share names, actual histories and so on; they can play those games.

What we will continue to do is work for all Ontarians to build a better system with lower rates, get fraud out of the system and continue to offer rates and premiums that are among the most competitive now in the country, having undone the damage that he and his partner did to this industry and this sector in Ontario in the years that they were in office.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. I'm extremely disappointed with Siemens' decision to take its operations to southwestern Ontario. We all know that Hamilton has a well-developed transportation system and a highly skilled workforce ready to work tomorrow. We have the facilities in place, ready for quick retrofit, with a natural water port to transport 50-metre long blades to all parts of Ontario.

Why has this Premier again failed Hamilton's unemployed and highly skilled workforce?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let's just take a gander at what it is we have been able to do in partnership with the good people of Hamilton. Just recently, it was the Max Aicher announcement: 300 high-value jobs in Hamilton; a couple of weeks ago, it was JNE Consulting: 300 new jobs; in the last two years, \$130 million in infrastructure stimulus investment in Hamilton: 2,900 jobs.

We're going to go ahead with the Pan Am Games in 2015. We're going to invest \$150 million in Hamilton. There's going to be a new 15,000-seat stadium, a new velodrome, a new Olympic-sized pool at McMaster: 1,750 jobs.

I think we've done a lot working with Hamilton, and we look forward to doing much more in the days to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: My numbers are a little different. The Liberals claim to work—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister of Finance, Minister of Economic Development, member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Please continue.

Mr. Paul Miller: The Liberals claim to work with the CAW, whose president Ken Lewenza was very, very clear: He wants the jobs at Siemens in Hamilton. Our hundreds of locked-out steelworkers could easily produce the steel for these wind turbines.

The Max Aicher jobs the Premier mentioned, those 300 jobs were dealt with three years ago; they're not new jobs and not due to—

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: That's nonsense.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Economic Development, the honourable member is trying to ask a question. It's a question to your Premier, who is sitting right next to you, and I want your Premier to be able to hear the question that's coming.

Please continue.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Speaker.

And the JNE jobs he was bragging about won't happen for two years, and they're minimum-paying jobs.

Hamilton has lost 20,000 jobs since 2004. Who was in government in 2004? That's when you started.

Will this Premier plan to recover the still 19,000 jobs we've lost?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I just want to say, having been in Hamilton last Thursday, to see the look of pride on those workers who were US steelworkers who had been laid off for years, in mills closed for months and months, watching—

Mr. Paul Miller: Load of garbage. Load of garbage. How do you like it? Load of garbage.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I have a large landfill site in my riding—

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: That's where he belongs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No; that's not helpful.

The honourable member, you just asked the question, and as I supported you in asking your question, I would now appreciate if you would listen to the answer from the minister.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Most appropriate, Speaker. Thank you.

I saw the looks on those faces when I was in Hamilton on Thursday, looks of pride that they will have great-paying jobs once again in Hamilton. We welcome Max Aicher to—

Mr. Paul Miller: Baloney.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek: I just warned you about listening.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's hard to resist—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, we're all honourable members, and that's not helpful.

The time for question period has ended.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Rick Johnson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to correct my record from November 23. During the adjournment debate, I stated that there were only seven new councillors in Simcoe county. That statement was incorrect.

The point I intended to make was that most of the 32 mayors and deputy mayors who will serve on the new Simcoe county council—indeed, all but seven of them—already currently serve as councillors for their respective towns and townships in Simcoe county. My apologies to the House for the error.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's a point of order. He can correct his record.

Mr. Norm Miller: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The Minister of Finance, in his response to me, implied that the letter that I provided in my question was a "secret letter," when in fact this is a real letter from a real constituent, which we've already referred to him.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, and I would encourage—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

I would encourage the honourable member to forward his letter, his correspondence, to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Peter Shurman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In my question to the Minister of Tourism about the Peter Van Kessel boat tour contract, the minister provided clearly incorrect information about the contract being competitive when it was in fact sole-sourced. I would expect the minister to apologize to this House—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member, and I am sure the minister, if he has erred, will correct his record. As well, the honourable member knows that if he is not satisfied with an answer he can call the minister for a late show.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Wellington–Halton Hills has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Tourism concerning the Niagara Parks Commission. This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Simcoe–Grey has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Tourism concerning the Niagara Parks Commission. The matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

DEFERRED VOTES

BROADER PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION DU SECTEUR PARAPUBLIC

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à accroître la responsabilisation financière des organismes du secteur parapublic.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1137 to 1142.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On November 30, Ms. Smith moved third reading of Bill 122. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Fonseca, Peter	Mitchell, Carol
Albanese, Laura	Gerretsen, John	Moridi, Reza
Arthurs, Wayne	Hampton, Howard	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoskins, Eric	Naqvi, Yasir
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Orazietti, David
Bentley, Christopher	Jaczek, Helena	Phillips, Gerry
Bisson, Gilles	Johnson, Rick	Prue, Michael
Brown, Michael A.	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Chan, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Chiarelli, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario	Smith, Monique
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Sousa, Charles
Dickson, Joe	McGuinty, Dalton	Takhar, Harinder S.
DiNovo, Cheri	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Paul	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Emie	Shurman, Peter
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Wilson, Jim
Barrett, Toby	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Chudleigh, Ted	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Dunlop, Garfield	Savoline, Joyce	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 57; the nays are 15.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

TICKET SPECULATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE TRAFIC DES BILLETS DE SPECTACLE

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act / Projet de loi 172, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le trafic des billets de spectacle.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1146 to 1147.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On December 1, Mr. Phillips moved third reading of Bill 172. All those in favour will rise one at a time to be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Fonseca, Peter	Mitchell, Carol
Albanese, Laura	Gerretsen, John	Moridi, Reza
Arthurs, Wayne	Hampton, Howard	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoskins, Eric	Naqvi, Yasir
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Orazietti, David
Bentley, Christopher	Jaczek, Helena	Phillips, Gerry
Bisson, Gilles	Johnson, Rick	Prue, Michael
Brown, Michael A.	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Chan, Michael	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Rinaldi, Lou
Chiarelli, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario	Smith, Monique
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Sousa, Charles
Dickson, Joe	McGuinty, Dalton	Takhar, Harinder S.
DiNovo, Cheri	McNeely, Phil	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wilkinson, John
Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Paul	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Emie	Shurman, Peter
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Wilson, Jim
Barrett, Toby	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Chudleigh, Ted	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Dunlop, Garfield	Savoline, Joyce	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 57; the nays are 14.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

Mr. Norm Miller: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to inform the House that the Minister of Finance responded to my secret letter on November 9.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. That is not a point of order.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Simcoe—Grey on a point of privilege, of which he gave due notice.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I do rise on a point of privilege. The issue arises from a contempt of the Legislature that was demonstrated in the distribution of Liberal election-style pamphlets during business hours on last Tuesday morning. While the pamphlets were apparently paid for by the Ontario Liberal Party, a November 30, 2010, article published in the Toronto Star confirms they were handed out by members of this House and their political aides. I have reason to believe that the political staff that handed out the material included individuals who are not paid by the Ontario Liberal caucus but rather are paid staff from ministers' offices. As such, the advertising blitz was supported by resources made available by the executive branch.

I believe it's clear on the face of the advertisement that I sent to you, Mr. Speaker, that the material publishes the Premier's assertion of "10% off your hydro bill." This promotes a proposed government program as if it were a foregone conclusion and that it has the approval of this assembly; it does not. Moreover, the information contradicts what members of the assembly were last told in the fall economic statement, namely that Premier McGuinty will be making Ontario families pay 46% more for hydro rates, not a 10% cut, which we know now is not quite correct.

In my respectful view, the facts of this advertising blitz mirror those that were before Speaker Curling, when he found a contempt of the assembly on February 22, 2005. According to Speaker Curling, "The minister appears to have made an announcement, outside the House, that anticipates a bill and a budgetary measure. But there is nothing wrong with anticipation per se—it happens a lot; the issue is whether the announcement goes further and reflects adversely on the parliamentary process."

It's also similar to the facts which led Speaker Stockwell's ruling of January 22, 1997. He was asked to rule on various advertisements and pamphlets and whether they constituted a breach of privilege. He concluded that a pamphlet that was written in such a way that the government program was a foregone conclusion was a contempt of the House.

I refer to Marleau and Camille Montpetit, a 2000 edition of House of Commons Procedure and Practice, which says, "Any conduct which offends the authority or dignity of the House, even though no breach of any specific privilege may have been committed, is referred to as a contempt of the House. Contempt may be an act or an omission; it does not have to actually obstruct or impede the House or a member, it merely has to have the tendency to produce such results."

I also refer to Speaker Sauvé's ruling in 1980 that said, "While our privileges are defined, contempt of the

House has no limits. When new ways are found to interfere with our proceedings, so too will the House, in appropriate cases, be able to find that a contempt of the House has occurred."

As with the facts leading to those rulings where contempt was found, the advertisement in this instance announces a bill as fact. This shows that the advertising did not respect parliamentary procedure, as Bill 135, the legislation the so-called discount refers to, was still in second reading. It's not quite correct information for the public to assume that this is approved government policy, thereby circumventing the rules of the House and showing contempt for the parliamentary process.

The material in question was distributed to the public by at least one person I believe to be government, not caucus, staff. I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that this assembly should be allowed to consider the distribution of this questionable material by government caucus members, its staff and their staff during a day when the House was in session. I believe that is captured by previous rulings. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this issue of privilege, which is unfounded and in fact almost specious in its assertions by the member for Simcoe—Grey. In fact, he refers to precedents which he says back his claims, and which in fact don't. I will take you through, just ever so briefly, his submissions.

First off, one of his submissions is that the election-style pamphlets set out—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Don't show it.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I won't show it, but I do have to refer to it because he did refer to the content and stated that the content was unequivocal in setting out that the government would provide 10% off hydro bills for families. In fact, if you look at it, as he has submitted it to you and I know you will take the time to look at it, it states that "only Ontario Liberals have a plan for a clean, reliable, and affordable electricity system," and then it enunciates what our plan is:

"—a new, clean energy industry and 50,000 good new jobs;

"—shutting down all dirty, smog-producing coal plants;

"—expanding clean, renewable sources of energy like wind and solar;

"—10% off hydro bills for families and small business;

"—conservation programs that work and save you more money."

That is our plan, as outlined in the brochure, and the brochure is paid for by the Ontario Liberal Party, not by this precinct or this Legislative Assembly.

It also sets out that the Conservatives could barely keep the lights on; that deregulation led to wild price spikes just when we needed power most; that they oppose new jobs from clean energy and that they still support dirty coal, which pollutes the air our children breathe.

The second part of the pamphlet, which the member from Simcoe has also submitted to you, clearly states, "Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals want to lower your hydro bills by 10%." It does not, in fact, state that we are; it says that we want to. It also goes on to say—and I think this is actually the seminal line in this document—"We're proposing to give your family a 10% reduction in your electricity bills, starting January 1, 2011."

It clearly states in Speaker Stockwell's ruling of January 1997, where he was dealing with an issue of contempt of advertising that members raised, that they believed was in contempt of the Legislature, "In my opinion, they convey the impression that the passage of the requisite legislation was not necessary"—this is on the actual ruling that he was making. He goes on to say, "I would not have come to this view had these claims or proposals—and that is all they are—been qualified by a statement that they would only become law if and when the Legislature gave its stamp of approval to them."

It is clear in this case, where he did find a *prima facie* case of contempt, that had there been qualifying language, he would not have. He's very clear on that.

He also discussed the fact that he does "express some personal concerns about the propriety of public funds being used to advocate, through advertising, a particular position on a matter that is before the" Legislature. He goes on to say, "I am not speaking here about politically paid for advertising, but rather about funds that are contributed to by every Ontarian." In fact, it is very clear.

Again, I will not show the document, but it is very clear that it is funded by the Liberal Party and provided by the Liberal Party on both sides of the documents that were handed out.

There are also some other precedents that are referred to and I just want to speak very briefly about Speaker Curling's ruling in February 2005, where he discussed an announcement that was raised by the member for Oak Ridges, a letter that was sent by the then Minister of Education, Mr. Kennedy. In his ruling, Speaker Curling notes that "there is nothing wrong with anticipation per se." I believe that my colleague actually said that in his submissions today and it is clear in these documents that they are anticipatory.

Mr. Curling went on to say, "In my opinion, the wording and the tone of the documents are not dismissive of the legislative role of the House. On the contrary, they indicate that the government had plans and proposals that require not only negotiation, but also the introduction and passage of legislation. In particular, the board letter and press release contain conditional phrases such as 'intends to introduce legislation,' 'we are proposing,' and 'legislation that, if passed,'" again mirroring the type of comments that are made in the brochure that was put out by the Liberal Party.

In this case, Mr. Curling actually found that a *prima facie* case of contempt had not been established. I believe in his letter the member for Simcoe refers to it as establishing a *prima facie* case, so I would just highlight that for you.

There are other precedents I would refer you to, particularly one that you made on March 23, 2010, regarding early learning that I had the privilege of speaking at that time.

There's one other issue that I do want to address and that is the issue of whether or not resources were being used inappropriately. In particular, the member for Simcoe-Grey raises the issue of paid staff for ministers' offices being asked to assist in the distribution of these documents. The member for Simcoe-Grey included—and I will not show it—in his submission a picture of someone he considered to be a staffer or thought was a staff person from a minister's office. In fact, we have been able to identify this person as a staff member from Minister Takhar's office. I understand the picture was taken at 4:15 p.m.; we have been able to determine that. In fact, this staff person goes to work at 7:30. She had put in her full day and was on her own time when she was seen distributing this document. There's nothing that says that people who work in this place can't volunteer their time after hours. In fact, everyone who was out assisting the Liberal Party that day was a volunteer. There is no ruling by the Speaker that says that cannot happen.

This is clearly not an issue of contempt. This is clearly not a violation of any privilege of this House. Unlike the Magna budget, which was clearly an issue of contempt, this is not.

I would just again draw your attention to the facts that are very obvious when looking at this document, where the Liberal Party and Dalton McGuinty's government speak of "wanting to," "of proposing," of wanting to provide and having a plan. Unlike the members opposite, we do have a plan. The party has a right to promote that plan and in no way has this document in any way violated any rules or standing orders of this House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member from Simcoe-Grey and the government House leader for their comments regarding the point of privilege. I'm going to take an opportunity to reserve my decision on this, to review the documents that have been provided and also to consult with the table and necessary sources.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1201 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I am pleased to rise today to recognize Friday, December 3, as International Day of Persons with Disabilities. It is a day to recognize how far we have come, but also how much further we need to go. All of the institutions housing Ontarians with an intellectual disability have now been closed, and individuals

now live in inclusive, supported residences within our communities. However, we still allow striking workers to picket those supported-living residences during times of labour unrest. This does not support the concept of respect and dignity individuals deserve.

When the Liberal government released their budget in March, it was revealed that they were backtracking on their commitment to provide a yearly 2% base funding increase for Community Living agencies. This broken promise greatly affects the more than 12,000 Ontarians with an intellectual disability currently sitting on a waiting list for residential supports. In Toronto alone, approximately 4,000 families are on the wait-list for special services at home, and what is most troubling is, no new applications have been approved since 2008. Yet this Liberal government continues to make funding announcement after funding announcement, prioritizing scholarships for foreign students instead of fixing the issues that are present today.

Some 15% of all Ontarians live or will live with a disability, and this number is rising as our population ages.

As we take a moment to recognize tomorrow as International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we must acknowledge our legislative responsibility to assist our friends and neighbours who live every day with a disability.

STEPHEN PETRUCCELLI

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have the distinct pleasure to recognize a wonderful and special constituent of mine: Mr. Stephen Petruccelli.

On November 27, I had the pleasure of participating in the 11th annual Give a Toonie, Share a Dream campaign that happens every year in November across all Staples Business Depot locations in support of the Special Olympics. Stephen was selected as the Special Olympics athlete to represent York region at the provincial winter Olympic games.

Stephen is a 30-year-old athlete with Down's syndrome. He has competed in various Special Olympics for the last 15 years, including the Special Olympics winter national games in Prince Edward Island in 2004, where he won one gold and two silver medals.

Stephen is also a very active constituent in my riding. He is a volunteer at York Central Hospital and at a dentist's office in Richmond Hill as a sterilization engineer.

The next provincial winter Special Olympics take place in Thunder Bay, and Stephen will be there once again proudly representing Richmond Hill.

Stephen's tremendous spirit is not only an inspirational story, it's also a true mark of the power of the human mind and body. I wish him the best of luck in his future endeavours. We are behind you, Stephen. Go, Stephen, go.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: As the member of provincial Parliament for Kitchener-Waterloo, I have the privilege

of representing the students at Wilfrid Laurier University and the University of Waterloo, who are part of OUSA. I would like to today, on their behalf, ask the Liberal government to live up to a promise that it made in 2007 to our post-secondary students.

In its 2007 platform, the Liberal Party made a promise to students and families that they would convert post-secondary education tax credits to upfront grants, but the government has not yet fulfilled this important commitment. The government spent \$330 million last year on these tax credits, amounting to the single greatest expenditure on non-repayable student financial assistance. However, these credits do little to help families gain access to post-secondary education. You see, the credits come late in the year and they do not help the students with the upfront, expensive costs of tuition, books and living expenses. Additionally, most students do not earn enough income to make full use of the tax credits, leaving them with significant financial need. Families across Ontario are hurting everywhere, so it is important to ensure that they can all access post-secondary education.

On behalf of all of the students that I represent and OUSA, I ask this Liberal government to fulfill its promise to the students and move the tax credits to upfront grants so that students receive the money when they need it.

EDGEWOOD VILLA

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to talk about a new development in Beaches-East York: It's called Edgewood Villa. It is a place that has been built for 29 or 30 hard-to-house people, and it is set up in the east end of Toronto. It was a remarkable place to visit. I went to their official opening earlier this week. This house was built with the assistance of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. and the city of Toronto.

As I said, there are 30 people who have homes there today who didn't have them before. Many of them are psychiatric survivors. Many of them are people who were homeless before.

It was an extreme pleasure to go into a building which in 2009 was derelict and see the remarkable work that was done by two very capable men, Ken McGowen and Bill Munro, and Habitat Services. They gutted the building and fixed it up. There are individual rooms and individual washrooms for each and every individual. The whole building has been transformed with a renovated kitchen, a dining room, an outdoor facility, a lounge, and an exercise room. It is truly what I think we need to do more of in this city.

So I congratulate them on the opening and look forward to welcoming them as the newest neighbours to Beaches-East York.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Charles Sousa: On behalf of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, I rise to recognize the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The annual observance

of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities occurs every December 3. It was enshrined by the United Nations with an aim to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.

Ontarians with disabilities play many important roles in our society. Our social, economic, arts and culture, political and academic communities are all richer for their participation. That's why our government continues its important work to create an accessible Ontario by 2025, where everyone has the same opportunities to live, work and play.

We're also fortunate to be served by many outstanding local organizations that facilitate and promote greater support and understanding of persons with disabilities.

I want to recognize the extraordinary work done by the volunteers at the Luso Canadian Charitable Society. Their members include businesses, trade associations and unions who, together, have reached out to the community and raised funds to build a brand new support centre for people with disabilities in Toronto. They're now expanding their efforts to the Hamilton region. Their work is making a real difference for individuals with physical and developmental disabilities.

In Mississauga, ErinoakKids does a tremendous job, providing necessary treatment and support services to children with physical, developmental and communication challenges. With our government's support, they're continually working to reduce wait times as the need for more—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Member from Leeds-Grenville.

SOLAR ENERGY PROJECTS

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise today regarding a situation facing a number of residents in my riding whose water quality has been affected by the construction of a 168,000-panel solar farm. They are forced to drink bottled water due to work on this project, which saw more than 14,000 holes being drilled into the bedrock. The once crystal clear water in their taps is now a murky mess. It's no surprise that they're upset and worried.

It's sad to see, yet again, how this government's mismanagement of the green energy file has hurt people. Premier McGuinty's costly energy experiments have caused hydro bills to soar, and the Green Energy Act is affecting people's quality of life.

The lack of municipal and public control over these projects has led the township of Rideau Lakes to propose three amendments to the act to give municipalities and the public more say. I urge the Minister of the Environment, the Minister of Energy and the Premier to consider the township's three recommendations: (1) to establish minimum setbacks for major solar farms similar to those for wind farms; (2) to force solar developers to ensure adequate landscaping to create visual buffers; and (3) to require developers to study the possible impacts on groundwater, including baseline water quality testing before construction.

ARZ BAKERY

Mr. Khalil Ramal: In this difficult economic time, it's important to recognize small business owners because of the contributions they make to the local economy. They employ many people and give them the ability to practise their talents—and besides that, the many spinoff jobs they create.

One business I would like to commend is Arz Bakery, a bakery and grocery store that has served Ontarians for over two decades. Arz Bakery draws customers from across the GTA and is not limited to loyal customers; because of their quality of service and an incredible variety of international foods, they are always drawing in new customers. To date, they have satisfied over 10 million of them, and just as important, they currently employ over 100 people with many spin-off jobs.

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The president of the company, Armand Boyadjian, is currently working hard with his brothers, Jack and Hovic, and their team to make their business a success story for everyone in the Scarborough area. It has become a landmark in the community, hosting some of the best baklava and cakes you find in the GTA. They have made an incredible name for themselves by employing talented chefs that have customers coming back to them again and again, every single day.

Besides that, they also contribute to the local economy and to group and charitable organizations, to soccer teams, to hockey teams, to the community centre and to charitable organizations because they believe strongly in their community, and they believe their responsibility is to support them back on a regular basis.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

Mr. Michael A. Brown: As the Legislature progresses towards the winter recess, our thoughts become increasingly focused on the Christmas season. Christmas parades, concerts, church services, children's parties, family gatherings, bazaars and volunteer celebrations bring joy across Algoma-Manitoulin.

In Manitowadage, Hawk Junction, Silver Water, Dubreuilville and Webbwood, families gather to celebrate the holiday season. In Elliot Lake, Hornepayne, Nairn Centre, Sheguiandah, Killarney and Wikwemikong, people delight in renewed friendships and the Christmas season. Folks in Chapleau and White River enjoy the experience of the Canadian Pacific's holiday train as it stops in their communities on its way across Canada. People in Spanish, Richards Landing, Central Manitoulin, Wawa and Aundeck Omni Kaning join the holiday season with homes festooned with lights, stars and wreaths. Christmas parties are enjoyed in Massey, Hilton Beach, Pic Mobert, Assiginack, Iron Bridge, and Gore Bay, and the people of Blind River, Espanola, M'Chigeeng, Algoma Mills, Desbarats and Whitefish River enjoy the festivities, too.

It is a time of the year when the always-generous people of Algoma-Manitoulin make a special effort to

see that those less fortunate can celebrate the holiday season also. I commend the service clubs, church groups, schools, companies and neighbours who make the Christmas season Christmas.

As we all look forward to a happy and prosperous 2011, let me wish you a merry Christmas and a very happy new year.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You forgot my good friends in Providence Bay.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: They're in Central Manitoulin, Speaker. You should know that.

WINE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to rise to thank the Wine Council of Ontario for coming to Queen's Park today. Today, members of this Legislature were challenged to get more VQA products on the wine lists of restaurants in their riding.

The Wine Council of Ontario can certainly count on my support and, I'm sure, on that of all of my colleagues. Our government believes in locally grown wine and food because we know it supports our farmers our environment and our economy.

We have four great wine regions in the province: the Niagara Peninsula, Pelee Island, Lake Erie North Shore and Prince Edward County. They are home to more than 400 vineyards and upwards of 15,000 acres of grapes.

Our government has renewed its successful VQA wine support program with an investment of \$30 million, and beginning in 2011, we will also provide \$3 million per year for four years to help grape growers transition to a long-term focus on VQA wines. These investments are part of our broader long-term plan for Ontario's wine and grape industry.

By working together, we can bring attention to the fact that good things grow in Ontario and that Ontarians should look for VQA wines whenever they make a purchase, whether in a store or in a restaurant, in all of our ridings.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

REPEAL OF THE HIDDEN ENERGY TAXES ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 ÉLIMINANT LES TAXES CACHÉES IMPOSÉES EN MATIÈRE D'ÉNERGIE

Mr. Yakabuski moved first reading of the following bill: Bill 144, An Act to amend the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 144, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The bill repeals section 26.1 of the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, which allows the board to collect money from consumers in their service areas, gas distributors, licensed distributors, the Independent Electricity System Operator and any other person prescribed by the regulations made under the act. The act requires that all money collected be paid to Ontario for certain purposes as set out in the act.

The bill does not affect the use of money payable under section 26.1 of the act before its repeal.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES

AMENDMENT ACT

(DAMAGE DEPOSITS), 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION À USAGE D'HABITATION (DÉPÔTS POUR DOMMAGES)

Mrs. Savoline moved first reading of the following bill: Bill 145, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 145, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: This bill amends the Residential Tenancies Act by giving landlords the option of collecting a damage deposit of no more than 25% of one month's rent from the tenants. The purpose of a damage deposit is to partially compensate landlords for the cost of repair or replacement of property that was wilfully or negligently damaged by a tenant and/or a specified person. The landlord and tenant must agree in writing as to the condition of the rental unit on the day the tenancy begins, and the damage deposit cannot be used to compensate ordinary wear and tear.

Damage deposits help to protect all tenants. In a case where a unit is damaged and a damage deposit is in place, the onus for at least some of the cost of the repair is on the current tenant and not an expense that would be borne by all the existing tenants in the building. In addition, damage deposits provide an incentive to tenants to ensure that housing units are in good condition for future renters, thereby also helping to protect the quality of rental housing in Ontario.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Margarett R. Best: I seek unanimous consent that any recorded votes arising from consideration of private members' public business today be deferred to deferred votes on Monday, December 6, 2010.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.
Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Paul Miller: "Save the Special Diet and Raise the Rates

"Whereas Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario disability support program (ODSP) do not provide enough money to meet basic needs; e.g., a single recipient receives only \$585 per month;

"Whereas single recipients in 1993 received over \$600 per month and inflation since then is estimated to be 35% to 40%;

"Whereas the special diet program provided one way people on OW and ODSP could acquire money to meet basic needs, especially the need for healthy food;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Save the special diet program and raise the rates to bring social assistance rates back to the 1995 levels before the 21.6% cut, adjusted for inflation."

I agree with this and will affix my signature.

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HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Geoff Fromow of Tecumseh Pines Home Owners' Association for sending this petition to me.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians," including the people of Tottenham.

I agree with this petition, and I will sign it.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Sarah.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have more petitions to do with paved shoulders on Ontario highways. It reads:

"Petition in Support of Bill 100 (Paved Shoulders on Provincial Highways)

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Norm Miller's private member's Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

Of course I support this petition.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Lynda McNicol, who picked up these petitions from the Stayner and Collingwood libraries, and also Blue Mountain Manor retirement services in Collingwood for sending these petitions to me. The petition is to save the medical laboratory services in Stayner.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller

hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians.”

I agree with the petition, and I will sign it.

HOME CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a petition that has been given to me by Mr. William Diaz, who is very interested in ensuring that people who will look after sick people and those with disabilities get taken care of. It reads as follows:

“To the Parliament of Ontario and the minister responsible for seniors:

“Whereas seniors who are disabled and/or ill are presently suffering at home; and

“Whereas the cost of a caregiver on a monthly basis who looks after a senior in their own home is around \$1,200, including room and board; and

“Whereas the cost of taking care of someone at home is at least 10 times less than the cost of a hospital bed; and

“Whereas most seniors with disabilities and/or illness are crowding an already overburdened health care system;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly request that a basic government subsidy be established (based on a doctor’s evaluation) which will pay at least a minimum allowance for a caregiver.

“Seniors deserve to live at home as long and as independently as possible.”

Since I enthusiastically agree with this petition I’m happy to sign it and send it to you through page Elizabeth.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

“Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebro-spinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore

its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis.”

I’ll affix my signature and send it to the table with page Donna.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Prue: I have here a petition from the good people of Wellington, Ontario, in Picton county. It reads as follows:

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST).”

I am in agreement and will sign my name thereto and send it with page Sarah.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: This petition is also about medical laboratory services, but this time to restore medical laboratory services in Elmvale.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

“Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians,” including the people of Elmvale.

Of course I agree with the petition and I will sign it.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition again, this time from the good people of Windsor. It reads as follows:

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST).”

I am in agreement with this as well and would sign it and send it down with page Tony.

**ONTARIO SOCIETY
FOR THE PREVENTION
OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS**

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition for provincial oversight of the OSPCA:

“Whereas the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) recently and unilaterally announced that it would euthanize all animals in its care at its Newmarket shelter, citing a ringworm outbreak as justification;

“Whereas the euthanasia plan was stopped in the face of repeated calls for a stay in the Legislature and by the public, but not until 99 animals had been killed;

“Whereas the Premier and Community Safety Minister Rick Bartolucci refused to act, claiming the provincial government has no jurisdiction over the OSPCA;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately implement the resolution tabled at Queen’s Park by Newmarket–Aurora MPP Frank Klees on June 1, 2010, which reads as follows:

“That, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario Legislature call on the government of Ontario to review the powers and authority granted to the OSPCA under the OSPCA Act and to make the necessary legislative changes to bring those powers under the authority of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to ensure that there is a clearly defined and effective provincial oversight of all animal shelter services in the province, and to separate the inspection and enforcement powers of the OSPCA from its functions as a charity providing animal shelter services.””

I agree with the petition and I will sign it.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition this time from the good people of Sudbury, Val Caron and Hanmer. It reads as follows:

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST).”

I’m in agreement, will sign my name thereto and send it down with page Donna.

1330

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I’ve received this petition from Consumer Federation Canada and Mr. Barnabic, the president of the federation.

“To the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of Government Services:

“Whereas identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America;

“Whereas confidential and private information is being stolen on a regular basis, affecting literally thousands of people;

“Whereas the cost of this crime exceeds billions of dollars;

“Whereas countless hours are wasted to restore one’s good credit rating;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that Bill 38, which passed the second reading unanimously in the Ontario Legislature ... be brought before committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

(1) All consumer reports should be provided in a truncated (masked-out) form, protecting our vital private information, such as SIN and loan account numbers.

(2) Should a consumer reporting agency discover that there has been an unlawful disclosure of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the affected consumer.

(3) The consumer reporting agency shall only report credit-inquiry records resulting from actual applications for credit or increase of credit, except in a report given to the consumer.

(4) The consumer reporting agency shall investigate disputed information within 30 days and correct, supplement or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed, incomplete or inaccurate.”

Since I agree, I’m delighted to sign this petition and send it to you with page Breana.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Jim Wilson: “Petition in Support of Bill 100 (Paved Shoulders on Provincial Highways)

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

“Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

“Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

“Whereas Norm Miller’s private member’s Bill 100 provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That Norm Miller’s private member’s Bill 100, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process.”

I agree with the petition and I will sign it.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I’d ask for the consent of the House to wear the purple ribbon in recognition of the Hawkins family, who perished two years ago from carbon monoxide poisoning.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

**HAWKINS GIGNAC ACT (CARBON
MONOXIDE DETECTORS), 2010**

**LOI HAWKINS GIGNAC DE 2010
(DÉTECTEURS DE MONOXYDE
DE CARBONE)**

Mr. Hardeman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 69, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 to require carbon monoxide detectors in all residential buildings / Projet de loi 69, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment pour exiger l'installation de détecteurs de monoxyde de carbone dans tous les bâtiments servant à l'habitation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 69, the Hawkins Gignac Act. This bill would save lives and prevent tragedies by requiring working carbon monoxide detectors in all Ontario homes.

I want to recognize John Gignac, who is here today to support the bill and who has been tireless in his efforts to raise awareness about the need for carbon monoxide detectors. John has personal experience with the tragedy of carbon monoxide poisoning. About two years ago, his niece, Laurie Hawkins, and her young family were poisoned by carbon monoxide after the exhaust on their gas fireplace was blocked and filled their home with the poisonous gas.

Richard and Laurie Hawkins, previously Laurie Gignac, were from North Bay, but after they moved to southwestern Ontario, they made Woodstock in Oxford county their home, and were an important part of our community. I'm honoured that their families allowed me to name the bill in their memory.

Richard Hawkins was a talented hockey player who played in the OHL and later shared his love of hockey with others by coaching the local team. His young son Jordan shared that passion for hockey and was already demonstrating a sense of responsibility as a paper boy. Fourteen-year-old Cassandra was in grade 9 at St. Mary's High School and was part of the social justice club.

As an OPP community relations officer, Constable Laurie Hawkins touched the lives of many people throughout Oxford, especially the students she visited. She shared stories about her family to help give them self-confidence and the knowledge they needed to make good decisions. It's tragic that someone who spent her life helping others and teaching them about safety was lost in a preventable tragedy.

Although carbon monoxide leaks occur, we can take steps to save lives. Just last week in Sault Ste. Marie, there was another incident. A gas fireplace wasn't vent-

ing properly, and the carbon monoxide was coming back into the home. But this time there was a difference. In 2009, Sault Ste. Marie passed a bylaw requiring homes to have carbon monoxide detectors. The alarm went off, and the fire department came and ventilated the house. Thankfully, due to the alarm, no one was hurt. Platoon Chief Joe May from Sault Ste. Marie Fire Services said afterwards, "CO alarms do save lives. They're just as important as smoke alarms."

Detectors are important because there are many sources of carbon monoxide in our homes: furnaces, water heaters, stoves and fireplaces to name just a few. It is produced any time fuel is burning. What makes it so dangerous is that carbon monoxide is tasteless, odourless and colourless. There is no way to detect it before it starts to make people sick. The only way to ensure that Ontario families are protected is to pass this bill and have a functioning carbon monoxide detector in every home.

This is not the first time we've debated the Hawkins Gignac Act in this Legislature. I first introduced this bill in December 2008, immediately following the tragedy. On April 2, 2009, it was debated and passed second reading unanimously. Unfortunately, when the government prorogued the Legislature last year, they chose not to carry it forward so we had to start the process again.

Over the last two years, members of both the Hawkins and Gignac families have been here to show their support for our bill. As well, firefighters, police officers, students who were taught safety by Laurie Hawkins and members of the community who were touched by the family have all come to the Legislature to demonstrate their support.

Today, I'm asking members to support this life-saving bill, and I'm asking the government to immediately hold committee hearings to ensure that it isn't lost again.

As technology improves and the cost of heating increases, people across Ontario are improving their homes, insulating and replacing windows and doors. As people make their homes more and more airtight, the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning increases.

Currently, carbon monoxide detectors are only required in homes built after August 2001 or in municipalities that have passed a bylaw, like North Bay and Niagara Falls. That leaves too many people at risk. This bill requires carbon monoxide detectors in all homes.

For new homes, detectors have to be hardwired and interconnected. Since this would be cost prohibitive in existing homes, they would require battery-operated or plug-in carbon monoxide detectors on each level. The bill is modelled on the regulations that make smoke detectors mandatory.

A number of coroner's juries have recommended legislation like this, which makes carbon monoxide detectors mandatory, in order to save lives. Eight years ago, a jury in Sudbury that investigated four deaths due to carbon monoxide poisoning made that recommendation. Just last year, Dr. Andrew McCallum, chief coroner of Ontario, made the same recommendation following an investigation into the death of an 84-year-old woman due to carbon monoxide poisoning.

Between 2001 and 2007, 74 people died in Ontario due to carbon monoxide poisoning. In fact, it is the number one cause of accidental poisoning deaths in North America. Just last Sunday, a Calgary man ended up in the hospital and almost died after roofers accidentally covered his furnace vent with a tarp, forcing carbon monoxide into his home. Yet, too many people are still unaware of the dangers of carbon monoxide.

Last year, I met a woman from the VON who told me about a parrot her daughter had given her. They took it home and, very shortly afterward, the bird died. They never even considered that carbon monoxide could be the cause. Why would they? There was no sign at all that there was something wrong in their home. They assumed the parrot had been ill and replaced it. But shortly afterward, the second bird died as well. They quickly got a carbon monoxide detector and discovered that their furnace had been slowly filling their house with the poisonous gas.

This was almost another tragedy. It demonstrates once again the importance of having a detector in your home.

1340

I know that people across Ontario have accepted the need to have smoke detectors on every level of their home. I hope that we can make people aware of the need for the same with carbon monoxide alarms. Currently, many people believe that one detector in the home is enough. It is a good first step, but the reality is that you not only need them near the potential source, you need them near the sleeping areas. Low levels or early stages of carbon monoxide poisoning have flu-like symptoms: tiredness, headaches, dizziness, nausea and vomiting. The natural reaction for most people is to go to bed. You need an alarm that will wake you and your family up and warn you to get out safely. That's why this bill requires a detector on all floors.

I've been very pleased at the support this bill has received from municipal councils who have passed resolutions of support, as well as organizations across Ontario including the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, Co-operators and the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario, to name only a few. Patrick Burke, the fire marshal of Ontario, said, "The fire service has always understood first-hand the importance of having early warnings and the tragedies related to carbon monoxide poisoning." Frank Lamie, deputy fire chief, Toronto Fire Services, said, "As you may know, the fire service is very much in favour of a requirement for carbon monoxide alarms. The tragedy in your riding is just one in a long line of needless deaths."

I recently received an email from Darrell Parker which read, "As fire chief of the town of Ingersoll, a friend and colleague of Constable Laurie Hawkins, I am writing to you to express my support of the Hawkins Gignac Act, 2010. The result of this tragedy still resonates within this community and within the emergency service providers that work so hard to keep our community safe. Much has been done in our local area to promote carbon monoxide

awareness and safety, and we are now looking forward to the passing of this bill."

As a former firefighter, I know that often they are the first to witness tragedy. I want to thank them for their work to protect and save lives. I also want to thank the firefighters' association for meeting with me and suggesting some good amendments to make the bill more effective. I hope that this bill will receive second reading today and that the government will schedule committee hearings as soon as they can to hear from groups like theirs.

The firefighters' association pointed out that this bill will help protect all of our emergency personnel by giving them more warning on what type of situation they are facing. Imagine that emergency personnel are told that there is a medical call. Someone is unconscious and it is assumed that it is a health issue, but in fact the house is full of carbon monoxide. Passing this bill and requiring a detector in all homes might not only save the homeowner, it could protect our emergency personnel.

But this bill is only one part of the effort to avoid future tragedies. The other half is education. We need to continue to raise awareness of the importance of having a detector and encouraging people not to wait for the legislation to pass, but to ensure they have working detectors in their home today. I want to commend John Gignac, who is working hard to get that message out through his foundation, the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation for CO Education. I want to thank him for all his work on this bill.

Over the last two years, many people and companies have been working hard to raise awareness about the dangers of carbon monoxide. I want to thank all the members of the media who have helped share that message. I want to particularly commend some of the companies who have made donations to ensure that people who might have difficulty affording the detectors are protected, including First Alert Canada, which donated a number of carbon monoxide detectors to Operation Sharing in my riding. I also want to thank Canadian Tire and Kidde Canada, who have generously donated carbon monoxide detectors to help save lives, and recognize Kidde's commitment to education about the dangers of carbon monoxide. Last spring, Enbridge announced a donation of \$100,000 to provide smoke and carbon monoxide detectors to be distributed through fire services in communities across Ontario. It is great to see all these organizations working to raise awareness and save lives.

Since I introduced this bill, I have heard many tragic stories of lives that have been lost due to carbon monoxide poisoning. But I've also heard many other stories about lives that have been saved by detectors, like the bishop from Kingston who bought a detector and, one day later, had a carbon monoxide leak at his home and was alerted by the alarm going off. He hadn't even installed it yet; it was still sitting on his kitchen counter. With more detectors in Ontario homes, hopefully we will have more positive stories like this one in the future.

This bill will save lives. The sooner it becomes law, the more tragedies we can prevent. I ask all members to support the bill today and ask the government to put aside partisan issues and immediately move forward with committee hearings.

I ask everyone listening here and at home to ensure your family is protected with functioning carbon monoxide detectors today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted to stand up and comment on Bill 69, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 to require carbon monoxide detectors in all residential buildings, which was introduced by my colleague the member for Oxford.

There's no doubt about it: Our government values the safety of all Ontarians. The safety of Ontarians is very important to us as a government, as a community and as a society. We encourage all residents to install carbon monoxide detectors to protect themselves, and also to inspect those detectors to make sure they are functioning very well.

I know the member speaks passionately about this issue because one of his constituents, a couple of years back, died from carbon monoxide. As he mentioned in his speech, many people across the province of Ontario have died, and it's important for all of us to make sure that all residences, whether single family homes or buildings, are protected and supplied and equipped with those detectors in order to make sure all the people live in a safe environment.

I listened to him carefully, and do you know what? As a member on this side, as he asked all the people to debate this issue without any partisan background or reason, I would say to him I'm standing up in my place on this side of the House to say congratulations for introducing this bill. It's important to you and important to us to make sure all people live in safe places.

I know that many people have lost their lives. Many friends and families and people we know, on a regular basis across the province of Ontario, die as a result of not installing carbon monoxide detectors in their buildings.

As we know, according to the building code, if you build a new building or renovate a building, you have to install carbon monoxide detectors in all new residential areas and buildings. But the building code does not force old, existing buildings to install carbon monoxide detectors.

Some municipalities, I believe, have lately passed bylaws to force residential buildings to install those detectors because they think it's important to make sure their population is safe, but many others don't, because we don't have a building code in the province of Ontario that forces all existing buildings and new buildings to have carbon monoxide detectors in place.

Therefore, I think the member from Oxford brings to the House a very important issue to be debated. It's important for all of us to add our input, and I think it's more important for all of us, as elected officials, to send

it to committee and listen to many different stakeholders, as he mentioned: fire departments, cities, construction companies. I think it would be important to enrich and enhance this bill; to allow this bill to go to committee and listen to the stakeholders and add their voice to our voices; and to make sure that when we pass the law for all Ontarians everywhere in the province, all the stakeholders are satisfied with the new bill that would be implemented across the province of Ontario.

In the end, I want to tell the member from Oxford, congratulations. I am looking forward to seeing the bill go to committee, where we can listen to many different stakeholders and experts who will give us advice and the ability to implement a solid future bill that can serve us well in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

1350

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm very happy to stand in support of my friend from Oxford's private member's bill, the Hawkins Gignac Act, on carbon monoxide detectors, Bill 69.

This is long overdue, and I think in contrast to some of the things that happen in this House, this is something we can all agree on. Carbon monoxide detectors, if they're good enough for new houses, have got to be good enough for all houses.

All you have to do is remember your high school chemistry: Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless gas. You can't see it, you can't smell it, and you don't know it's there. By the time you find out it's there, it's too late for you. It bonds to your red blood cells. It is what some people call the silent killer. We have to do something about this. I can tell you, in our household, we have had it there for many years.

These detectors are not like smoke detectors. Smoke detectors are great if you're asleep, because it's an audible alert. These you need 24 hours a day because you need an alert that tells you something exists that you have no way of knowing about unless you have some kind of warning.

This bill will, therefore, protect lives and prevent tragedies through requiring working carbon monoxide detectors in each and every home in the province of Ontario. Quite simply, the bill saves lives. It saves lives. Between 2001 and 2007, 74 people died in Ontario due to carbon monoxide poisoning. In fact, it is the number one cause of accidental poisoning deaths in North America. It seems like something that's somewhat arcane, but the member from Oxford keeps bringing this bill back because it makes sense. We've got to get this thing to committee. We've got to get it passed.

In fact, a British Columbia health organization estimated that each year 13,000 Canadians have some level of carbon monoxide poisoning.

I remember in my own home having the furnace looked at for its annual cleaning. I might use this as a commercial and say that everybody with an operating furnace of any type should have it looked at annually. I

was told: "You have this percentage of carbon monoxide coming out of this furnace, and when you get to"—some level, and my memory seems to recall 15% carbon monoxide—"you've really got to change this unit and get a new one." We were getting close to that, so he was recommending very strongly that we put carbon monoxide detectors in the house. I informed him we had them for just that reason. It makes good sense.

To protect lives, every house with a fuel-burning appliance or attached garage should have a working carbon monoxide alarm on every floor. Today there are too many homes without one. Currently, only houses built after 2001 are required to have carbon monoxide detectors, and that means there are too many homes in Ontario where people are at risk. I can't repeat this too many times: This is colourless, odourless, and there's only one way to know that it's there. That is to have a device, a carbon monoxide detector, that says, "It's there; get yourself out of the house and start ventilating."

Despite the fact that we have so many tragedies in Ontario, we still don't have this act in law, and despite the fact that coroner's juries have recommended legislation be changed to make carbon monoxide detectors mandatory. Firefighters and fire departments across Ontario continue to raise awareness about the need for carbon monoxide detectors in all homes. We need to support our firefighters' efforts.

Every member in this House has an obligation to support this bill. The Hawkins Gignac Act is modeled on regulations which makes smoke detectors mandatory. Again, how can we not support this bill?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It is my honour to stand today in support of this bill. I don't think I have any hesitation in expecting that all members of this House will support this bill, as they did on the last occasion.

My friend from Oxford is tenacious. He stands here, again, to ask that we support this bill. I know that it is not the fault of the House or any individual in the House, but this bill was brought forward last year and died as a result of prorogation.

The member from Oxford is asking for a very simple thing. He's asking that we recognize that carbon monoxide, in an industrial society like our own, is prevalent. It can get into anybody's house through any heating apparatus or through any automobile. It is a silent killer, as has been said.

It is such an efficient killer that people don't recognize or realize. It is absolutely efficient because it will combine with the haemoglobin in a person's bloodstream with 100 times the efficiency that oxygen combines with haemoglobin and actually displaces the oxygen through normal breathing. It is a killer of some extreme rapidity. Almost every single victim never knows what is happening to them, never has an idea. They may feel tired. They have no idea that there's anything wrong, and until the alarm goes off would probably be oblivious to the fact.

This is the second time my friend has had to bring this bill before the House. I am reminded, and I want to talk a minute, about all of the good work that is being done in this House around fire safety and safety issues. My friend is bringing forth this bill for the second time.

I see my friend from Scarborough—Pickering opposite, who has brought forward three or four times a bill for visual fire alarms for the deaf and hard of hearing so that they can have the option and the ability to have visual fire alarms to alert them, and I assume visible carbon monoxide alarms would go right along with that so that they would have the opportunity of seeing what they cannot hear. That bill is in its fourth iteration. It's coming around again and again and it has not passed into law. It is absolutely sane. It is absolutely what is necessary for the safety of the people of this province.

I am reminded that the now Minister of Natural Resources has come before this House on at least three and possibly four occasions, trying to make mandatory sprinklers available in all new houses built in the province of Ontario. It has been debated three or four times in this House and has been passed unanimously and then nothing happened with it. It is an excellent bill that needs something to happen for it in terms of fire safety.

The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, my colleague who sits immediately behind me here, has brought forward a bill on two occasions for mandatory fire alarms and mandatory sprinklers in all seniors' residences. That has been debated on two occasions and passed unanimously, and unfortunately nothing has happened with it.

I myself on two or three occasions now have brought forward a bill that would ban wooden fire escapes in the province of Ontario because it makes no sense that people who live in wooden buildings or buildings that are combustible and of an age that aren't as fireproof as modern buildings should have as their only means of egress a fire escape made of wood, which itself would probably be on fire at the same time the building was on fire. That, too, has made it all the way through committee on two occasions and has been passed but never ordered for third reading.

I think what we need to do in combination, all members of this House, is to not only pass this bill here today, but take all of those bills, take all of those good ideas that come from the government side, from the opposition side, from individual members, which have all been approved unanimously on every occasion they've been brought forward and put them into an omnibus bill. I'm sure my friend from Oxford would have no objections if what he is saying and doing today was combined with the other safety measures that we all know are necessary.

People in this province are dying. People in this province do not have the safety which can be afforded to them. What is the roadblock? What is the roadblock for making life safer for ordinary Ontarians? I know when I have gone to committees on some of these bills, the roadblock sometimes is the building industry. I know that sometimes the roadblock is those people who own apart-

ment buildings and who don't want to put in safety devices like we're talking about here today, carbon monoxide detectors, because they cost \$30 or \$40 or \$50 to install and they just don't want to do it. But I think we, as parliamentarians, as legislators, have the right and the duty to do what is going to protect lives.

So I am asking the members, and particularly the members opposite me here today, pass this bill, yes, because that's all we get to vote on today. Pass this bill, but please, take this back to your caucus. Take it back in combination with the government members' own bills and ask the ministers, ask the Premier to do something. It's not enough to just debate this issue in the House this time for the second time. We need to pass it.

1400

As the member from Oxford stated, 72 people have died in the last number of years as a result of carbon monoxide. That number has expanded many fold over those who have lost their lives in fires, those who have lost their lives and have never had the opportunity to hear the alarms go off, those who could have been saved with sprinklers in their houses.

I think we need to do that, and I'm asking the members opposite, when we leave here today, when we vote unanimously for this bill, as I know we probably will, to go back to caucus and say, "We need to do some more. We need not just to stop here. We need to pass it." It can be passed alone. It can be passed in combination. It can have a government bill number on it, and I don't think any of us who have proposed these bills will take umbrage if the government seizes the idea and runs with it and does something for the people of Ontario. This is not cost-prohibitive for the treasury. This is not going to cost a lot of money to the people of this province. It is a very modicum of money that is going to be spent individually, or, if you are an apartment owner or a building owner, perhaps a little more, but it is easily totally recoverable through rent and other things. So I'm asking the members to do exactly that.

On the last occasion, my colleague from Parkdale-High Park talked about her own experience. I'd like to read this into the record because it's absolutely poignant how it affected one member of this Legislature who, as I think she put it, by the grace of God escaped, thanks to a carbon monoxide detector. On the last occasion, Ms. DiNovo stated the following, and I'd like to quote it into the record again:

"This is a personal issue for me too, because before I was a politician I was a United Church minister, and early on, coming to Toronto and accepting a charge, we moved into a rental house. It was the first house, I have to say, that had a carbon monoxide detector in it. I had never seen such a thing before. We really didn't know anything about carbon monoxide or the possibilities of carbon monoxide poisoning. Then one day it started beeping, and like some of the stories that I've read in doing research for this bill, we thought there was something wrong with the detector. We turned it off, and it kicked back in; it started beeping again. I thought, 'I

don't really know what this is about but maybe we should phone the fire department, just in case,' feeling a little embarrassed, actually, thinking that they'll come and it'll be nothing. It will just be a faulty detector. Certainly, we could smell nothing; we detected nothing in the house.

"This is so typical of what families go through and have gone through. The fire department was there, as usual, in minutes. Within minutes more, the entire street was cordoned off. That's how bad it was. It was a real wake-up call to us as a family. Had we not done that, had we not had the carbon monoxide detector operative and working in our house—who knows? My two children were in the house at the time, my husband, myself, our animals. We're just very glad that we had one, and it was unfortunately not due to our own awareness."

She went on to support Bill 143, as it was at that time, and I support it equally strongly today. I do know that in purchasing a recent summer property I made sure not only that it had carbon monoxide detectors—and we went out and bought three, one for each floor—but that it was also sprinklered, because if you're going to buy a newer home, that's what you need to do. The costs are not that great, and certainly the insurance costs go down as a result as well.

I would like to close by just reading a quote or two, if time permits, from some firefighters. First of all, Dave Thomson, past president of the Firefighters Association of Ontario, says, "Carbon monoxide is known as the silent killer. With the introduction of the Hawkins Gignac Act, this will ensure that all homes in Ontario will have early detection on all levels of residences and that they are installed and maintained properly."

Frank Lamie, the deputy fire chief of Toronto Fire Services, stated the following: "During the early part of my career I attended several tragic situations involving carbon monoxide exposure. People would be found in their beds and it would be determined that the CO from a vehicle that had been left running in an attached garage had seeped into the house. As CO is odourless, tasteless, and colourless there was no warning that this silent killer was even a concern."

"I believe that tragedies like these are 100% avoidable. Many cities have passed by-laws that require CO detectors to be installed in all dwelling units where a fuel-fired appliance exists. I believe that if this was made law for the entire province of Ontario we would all but eliminate needless deaths due to carbon monoxide poisoning."

I ask the members present to vote for this bill and to do even more: Pass them all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'd like to open my remarks, first of all, by thanking John Gignac, who is here today and who is the head of the foundation for carbon monoxide education. I think, John, what you will see most likely is unanimous consent here, and you're going to go home fairly happy.

Second, we want to of course say thank you very much to the member from Oxford because he has taken this more than seriously. In fact, he wants to require that carbon monoxide detectors are installed in all residential buildings; not only new homes, but every home in Ontario. I'm happy that almost in the same sentence here he says that these carbon monoxide detectors must "conform to standards prescribed by the regulations made under the act." That's an important item because we know today what some people do in terms of fire detection and smoke alarm detectors.

We all know that a smoke detector is not a one-size-fits-all. There are many kinds of smoke detectors. For most tenants, I might say, these smoke detectors are too sensitive, especially for those who live in Toronto in these very small bachelor units or bachelorette buildings. That would mean that you have one smoke detector, and as soon as you turn on the water or begin to cook something, that smoke detector will cause an alarm.

Obviously, there are two or three options when the smoke detector is that sensitive. What people find—in the newspapers, it tells us certainly—is that either the tenant tapes it over with Scotch tape or some other tape, or removes the battery or switches the whole thing off. So in short, I think when you say that standards should be applied and prescribed, this is very important, because the engineering in this is a very important item.

I happen to think that it makes little sense to have a carbon monoxide detector operated only by a battery, because a battery runs out within a year or a year and a half, and then you have to start from the beginning again. The best-engineered item in terms of carbon monoxide detection would certainly be one that you plug in and one that's either battery operated along with being electrically operated—

Mr. Mike Colle: Hard-wired.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: —along with being hard-wired. The whole unit should be hardwired. That's a very important item, and I know that the member from Oxford certainly agrees with that.

One more item of caution, and that is, that as people in Ontario are listening to our debate here and the member from Oxford, they should also know that carbon monoxide is really produced by incomplete combustion of fuels. That could be propane, heating oil, kerosene, coal, charcoal, gasoline or wood. There are thousands of wood-burning stoves. When you take a piece of wood that is painted, as an example, or that has been ossified to some degree, and you stick it in a wood-burning place, then some gas will naturally escape. That gas will then be identified through the carbon monoxide detection. So that's a very important item as well. Anyone who burns wood should know that this is an important item. Even if you're in the country, even if you're on a farm, it is important that you plug in that carbon monoxide detector because it is, as the member says, going to save some lives.

Finally, we know that this kind of gas from incomplete combustion impairs their judgment.

To finish up my short comments here: As it is the number one cause of accidental poisoning death in North America, I think it behooves all of us to ensure that carbon monoxide detectors are inside all homes.

1410

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I want to begin by congratulating the member for Oxford for his continued and very determined commitment to ensuring that every household in the province of Ontario is protected from the threat of carbon monoxide poisoning.

I am a strong proponent of this bill. I know that in our own home, we do have carbon monoxide detectors on each level.

As you know, the residents of Oxford suffered a tragic loss due to carbon monoxide poisoning, and I know that this heartbreaking experience has had a profound impact on our colleague from Oxford. He saw a very vibrant, young family totally destroyed by carbon monoxide poisoning and, as a result, it has impacted him and it has impacted that community.

I want to thank the relatives of the Hawkins family who are here today, and to express my sympathy to you for your loss. I sincerely hope that what happened to the members of your family will at long last provide the impetus to this House to move forward and ensure that this bill is passed today and is passed for third reading, in order that we can ensure that everybody in this province is obligated to install carbon monoxide detectors to make sure that a tragedy such as the one that happened to the Hawkins family does not happen again.

This bill would amend the Building Code Act, 1992, to mandate detectors to be present in all residential buildings. As we've heard today, only homes that were built after 2001 must be equipped with a detector, so we have many homes that are not protected today.

This is an important bill. We've heard as well that carbon monoxide is dangerous because it is odourless, tasteless and colourless. It is a silent killer. We can be surrounded by it in our homes and have no idea whatsoever of the danger we are in, and we've heard examples of that.

So today we have an opportunity to take the steps that are necessary to prevent tragedies such as the one that happened in Oxford. We have an opportunity to pass legislation that would require the installation of carbon monoxide detectors in the homes of people in this province. It is a simple, inexpensive and practical way to protect ourselves and our loved ones. We also have to remember that we must make sure that our furnaces and ventilation pipes are inspected at least once a year to determine that they are functioning properly. These are a few of the measures we can take to make sure that our households are safe.

It is always regrettable and it is very sad when tragedies such as what happened to the Hawkins family occur. However, when this bill passes, and I have no doubt that it will, we will at least have been able to use the example

positively, to make change for the better in the province of Ontario. For that, the Hawkins and Gignac families should be very proud.

I again applaud the member for Oxford for his dedication and commitment to making sure other families and communities are not afflicted with the grief which that community has suffered.

I want to thank the family members who are here today and who are working so hard to make sure that this legislation is passed and that this tragedy does not happen to another family.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: Let me make a couple of quick points first, before I get into the bulk of my comments. I could speak for about 20 minutes on this topic, maybe an hour, but I only have a few minutes.

First, let me thank the member from Oxford. He has my commitment to support the bill, as he did before. Obviously this is an issue that does go beyond partisan lines. I'm hoping that there is no tinge of partisanship here at all, and I reiterate his comment.

Second, and most importantly, let me one more time offer to the Gignac and Hawkins families my deepest sympathies, not just as friends but as close friends. John, Sandy and I and my brother are long-time friends. The Hawkins and Gignac families deserve our respect for doing a very powerful thing today.

What they're doing is turning something that could have made them go inward, and they've turned it to go outward. John himself is not a public man. He fought that through to become public enough to make a commitment and a promise, as he and his wife did, that on their deathbed, they asked them to do this—and that tells me about the power of the human spirit. To them and their entire family, a very large thank you and a large commitment to you for being such dedicated people to turn a tragedy into something that's important.

The two components are to get the CO detectors in homes and education. Very few people know that. We did a survey in Brantford and found out that only 20% of people were using carbon monoxide detectors, and they didn't know what their purpose was. It's an important aspect that's getting overlooked, and I hope we're not doing that.

John and Sandy co-chair an organization I founded back in 1998 called the Friends of the Firefighters. We're raising \$100,000 to put smoke detectors into homes in Brantford and area. A portion of that is being dedicated to the Canadian Hearing Society, which is a very special circumstance, so that they can have those detectors put into their homes as well. We're about three quarters of the way through the campaign, and I want to thank John and Sandy for co-chairing that. I've been helping with that, but for them to turn around and create the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation—in itself it became a national and soon-to-be international opportunity.

My own private member's Bill 34 complements what the member is doing. It's An Act to proclaim Carbon

Monoxide Awareness Week to enforce exactly what he's looking for, not just putting the CO detectors in homes, but educating people so that they naturally do it. The function of what we're doing here today is laudable, but most laudable is the fact that the family has turned this amazing tragedy into a positive and their dedication to do that. They've been able to draw international companies and corporations to join them in their quest to do that. It bodes well for them on the private sector side that they've come on-side and understand that this isn't about selling those implements, because quite frankly, in a very large portion of the cases right now, they're actually giving them away.

I want to laud the member from Oxford again, I want to thank the House for being as non-partisan as this place can possibly get, and I also thank one more time the family for participating locally in the Friends of the Firefighters campaign to raise that \$100,000 to put towards those CO detectors for those people who can't quite afford to get them.

By the way, CO detectors only last about seven years. I would ask us all, on top of that, to make sure you replace these things, because they only last seven years.

Thank you very much, and I laud the member from Oxford one more time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today and speak in support of this important piece of legislation, Bill 69, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 to require carbon monoxide detectors in all residential buildings. I, too, applaud the member for Oxford for his foresight in drafting this bill.

Previous legislators who sat exactly where we sit today had the wherewithal and good judgement to enact legislation that serves to protect Ontarians from fatal threats in our homes and businesses. Those members were committed to fire alarms in all homes and carbon monoxide detection in new homes and buildings. Those members at that time saw that by enacting a simple piece of legislation they could save lives of countless numbers of individuals and families from undue tragedy and grief that had befallen far too many before.

I was fortunate enough in my former employment to work for a very forward-thinking company. Every year, when they made safety presentations, among the items they gave those employees—myself included—were carbon monoxide detectors. Those were some of the first carbon monoxide detectors that I had seen in our part of the country, so I know there are a number of homes—and I'm going to take the member from Brant's suggestion and double-check the date on mine and see how long they've been there, because something that a lot of people probably don't know is that there is a life cycle to those.

I won't go into a lot of details. A number of speakers have talked about carbon monoxide gas, that it's created from burning any kind of carbon fuel. Also, carbon monoxide is often called the silent killer because it gives

no clear warnings to its victims. It's an invisible gas with no taste or smell. Without carbon monoxide alarms, families are unable to detect the presence of this poisonous gas in any concentration. It is an ever-present threat and has needlessly inflicted pain and suffering on many of our families and all of our communities.

1420

I'd like to touch on several troubling statistics that I found while researching in regard to this. It's the number one of cause of accidental poisoning deaths in North America. Close to 15% of the incidents investigated by the Technical Standards and Safety Authority involve carbon monoxide. A British Columbia health organization, as one of the other members said, estimated that each year some 13,000 Canadians experience some level of carbon monoxide poisoning. In Ontario, close to 150 people are seen in emergency departments for carbon monoxide poisoning each month, thereby causing an undue load that could be prevented in our emergency departments and causing costs to our health system that could be prevented. In Ontario in 2007-08 there were almost 1,800 emergency department visits and 102 hospitalizations—and, thereby, expensive treatments—for carbon monoxide poisoning.

By enacting this simple piece of legislation, Bill 69, we will be doing our part to prevent any other families from experiencing the tragedy that befell the Hawkins Gignac family in late 2008. Richard, Laurie, Cassandra and Jordan were all overcome by carbon monoxide because a seemingly benign exhaust vent on a gas fireplace had become blocked simply from years of use. Like other Canadians who heat their home for comfort and survival, this family had no expectation that simply using a heating system could cause that. It's not fair or reasonable to expect that such a simple act could have such a profound consequence. The family did not own a carbon monoxide detector, and this led to their unfortunate demise.

Installing a minimum of one of these carbon monoxide alarms in each home, outside the primary sleeping area, is a key step to protecting lives and making homes safer. It ought to go hand in hand with the need for regular inspection.

I therefore urge all members to support this legislation. I commend the member from Oxford again and look forward to voting on this and the possible implementation of this bill in the near future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member for Oxford has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the members from London—Fanshawe, Thornhill, Beaches—East York, Davenport, Kitchener—Waterloo, Brant, and Sarnia—Lambton for their kind comments and support.

As I was listening to the presentations, it came to mind, obviously, that the driver for introducing this bill was the tragedy that happened in Woodstock to the Hawkins family, but what was interesting, from the perspective of us legislators, is that if that house had been built a few years later, it would have had carbon monoxide detectors installed because the law said they had to.

This whole bill is about awareness, to make sure that all people in Ontario have the same protection when it comes to detecting carbon monoxide in their homes. Just because a house was built before 2001 doesn't mean that under the law they shouldn't have exactly the same protections as anyone else.

I've heard comments from people saying, "Why should the government have to tell us we have to do this?" I want to say that unless there's awareness of the risk of the silent killer, when the people realize themselves that they need it, it's too late. Once they recognize that that's the reason they aren't feeling well, chances are they're never going to feel any better than at that moment, because that very well could be the end, because they do not know what is happening to them. It's so important that we bring awareness. I would like to see this bill pass, but the main reason I bring it back—and if, for whatever reason, it doesn't pass, we would continue doing the same thing, to create awareness to make sure that people realize they should have them for their own protection.

I don't believe there are many people, if any, who wouldn't think that the price of a carbon monoxide detector would be worth it if it saves their families' lives. I'm sure the Hawkins family would pay any price to put one in their home so that tragedy would never have happened.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for this ballot item has expired. We will vote on it in about 100 minutes.

JAMAICAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should proclaim August 6 of each year Jamaican Independence Day throughout the province of Ontario, so that the outstanding achievements and contributions made by Ontarians of Jamaican heritage can be celebrated and recognized.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Balkissoon moves private member's notice of motion number 57. Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: It is a privilege and an honour for me to rise today and address the House. I'm extremely pleased to bring forth my resolution to proclaim August 6 of each year Jamaican Independence Day in the province of Ontario so that the outstanding achievements and contributions made by Ontarians of Jamaican heritage can be celebrated and recognized.

Before I begin, I would like to take a minute to introduce some of our guests who are here because they have an interest in this particular motion. From the consulate of Jamaica we have Mr. George Ramocan; we have Carolyn Goulbourne Warren from the Jamaican Information Service; Hyacinth Sulph-Curling—many of us know Mr. Curling—the better half; and Ida Fogo. I understand that there will be others that are joining us

later, and hopefully I'll give it my best to recognize them as they come in.

Let me start with a brief history about Jamaica. Jamaica was once ruled by the Spanish and it was known as Santiago. In 1655, it became a British colony known as it is today, Jamaica. In the 1930s, Jamaica was heading towards another crisis due to local discontent with political changes, worldwide economic depression, falling sugar prices, unemployment and a rising population. Things finally came to a head in 1938 with widespread violence and rioting. As a result of these disturbances, the first labour unions and the two major political parties were formed in the country. Sir Alexander Bustamante, founder and leader of the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union, led the Jamaica Labour Party. Norman Manley, founder and leader of the National Workers Union, led the People's National Party. Both Bustamante and Manley were instrumental in Jamaica's move towards self-government.

In April 1962, Alexander Bustamante became the first Prime Minister of Jamaica. On August 6, 1962, Jamaica achieved full independence from Great Britain and became a member of the British Commonwealth.

A little history about Jamaicans coming to Canada: A group of 556 Jamaicans arrived in Canada in 1796 after an unsuccessful British attempt to enslave them in Jamaica. Between 1800 and 1920, a small number of Jamaicans immigrated as labourers to Nova Scotia. But from 1920 until the early 1960s, immigration was virtually non-existent.

In the 1900s, the Jamaicans who migrated to Canada included John Robert Giscome, a gold prospector; James Barnswell, a carpenter; and Robert Sutherland, who graduated from Queen's University and became the first black lawyer in Canada.

In the early 20th century, Jamaicans came to Canada to work as domestics, Canadian railway porters and blacksmiths. Due to Canada's restrictive immigration policies, it wasn't until the domestic program was implemented in 1955 that there was an increase in Jamaican immigration to Canada. Up until 1965, only about 1,000 Jamaican women had come to Canada under the domestic status program.

Due to a severe shortage of nurses in the late 1960s, Jamaican nurses were able to come to Canada under the cases-of-special-merit provisions of the immigration act.

In 1967, immigration laws were modified, and under the points system, more Jamaicans were able to come to Canada based on their level of education and skill.

As you can see, Jamaicans have been contributing to our country since the late 1700s. Many have made great contributions, but because of time, I would like to take a little moment to mention a few prominent Jamaicans whom most of us are familiar with. Before I begin, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the Honourable Margarett Best, the Minister of Health Promotion, a Jamaican herself, who is very passionate about this resolution and will be speaking to you in a few minutes.

1430

We all remember the Honourable Lincoln Alexander. He was born in 1922 in Toronto to Jamaican parents. In 1985, he was appointed Ontario's 24th Lieutenant Governor, the first member of a visible minority to serve as the Queen's representative in Canada, a post he held admirably.

During his term in office, youth and education were hallmarks of his mandate. He served during the Second World War. He was the first black person to become a member of Parliament, in 1968, and served in the House of Commons until 1980. He was the federal Minister of Labour from 1979 to 1980.

We also have the Honourable Alvin Curling, former MPP for Scarborough-Rouge River and Speaker of this House from 2003 to 2005.

As a city councillor, I had the opportunity of serving with Mr. Curling, representing the same residents of Scarborough-Rouge River. As you know, after Mr. Curling retired from this Legislature, I became his successor.

He was first elected to the Ontario Legislature in 1985, and had a distinguished 20-year career representing Scarborough-Rouge River. During this time, he was Minister of Housing, Minister of Skills Development and deputy House leader, and then became Speaker of the House.

We also had the Honourable Mary Anne Chambers, former Ontario Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities and Minister of Children and Youth Services, and also a former vice-president of Scotiabank Canada. She was involved on a number of task forces concerning the role of women in the workplace.

A member of the board of governors of the University of Toronto and vice-chair of the governing council, she helped to author a university policy that no student would be prevented from studying in Toronto due to inadequate financial resources.

In 2003, she was awarded the Prime Minister's medal of appreciation for service to Jamaica by Jamaican Prime Minister Percival James Patterson in recognition of her work within Toronto's Jamaican community.

On a personal note, I have known and served with the Honourable Mary Anne Chambers in this Legislature. I have a great deal of respect for her and her incredible accomplishments as Minister of Children and Youth Services. We continue to be friends today.

According to the 2006 census, there are approximately 231,000 Jamaicans in Canada, with 85% living in Ontario. Of those, 160,000 or so live in Toronto. The Consul General of Jamaica estimates that there may be 300,000 Jamaicans, including those of Jamaican descent, living in our great city of Toronto.

A stroll through one of our communities would provide a glimpse of the traditions and cultures that we have come to appreciate. Jerk chicken, ackee and salt fish are some of the traditional dishes Jamaicans have introduced to us. And who can resist the great reggae music that is known around the world? Bob Marley's One Love is one of my favourite songs.

Let's show Jamaicans our appreciation by officially recognizing the contributions that Jamaicans have made to Ontario by celebrating Jamaican Independence Day every August 6.

Maybe I should mention some of the other people from the community in Toronto who were going to be here. I'm not sure if they're here, because I can't see all the way to the back.

We were supposed to have Mr. Nemehiah Bailey, past president of the Jamaican Canadian Association; Pauline Christian, president of the Black Business Professionals Association; Sharon Ffolkes-Abrahams, president of the Jamaican Diaspora Canada Foundation; Mr. Michael Foster, CEO, Jamaican Canadian Association; Cikiah Thomas, an educator; and Stanley Grizzle, a World War II veteran.

I also understand that Gloria Richards, from the Speaker's office, who has been there, as many of us know, for quite a long time, is also watching with a lot of her friends.

I want to thank all of them for being here.

I want to thank all of you for giving me the opportunity to bring this resolution, and hopefully I will have your full support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to rise in support of the motion from the member from Scarborough-Rouge River, which would recognize Jamaican Independence Day in Ontario every August 6.

We know, of course, that Jamaica has been a great friend to Canada and Ontario since the Caribbean nation won its independence from the United Kingdom on August 6, 1962. It's also been, as the member has talked about, the birthplace of many great people who immigrated to Canada to make this country and this province of Ontario a better place with their brave decision. Currently, as was stated earlier, of the 231,000 people of Jamaican descent living in Canada, about 181,000 are residents here in our province of Ontario, and I'd like to take the opportunity to welcome all of our visitors here in the Legislative Assembly today.

Generations of Jamaican immigrants have left a lasting legacy on this province in a variety of areas, including arts, culture, business, sports and politics, and I know I look forward to hearing the Minister of Health Promotion make a few comments here as well today. Official recognition by Ontario of Jamaican Independence Day is a way to formally celebrate and honour these contributions by people. I appreciate the member for Scarborough-Rouge River mentioning Lincoln Alexander, our former Lieutenant Governor. His mother came to Canada from Jamaica.

Like every other ethnic group that has come to Ontario from around the world, I could list dozens of Jamaicans who have become household names by virtue of their remarkable accomplishments, which have made all of us feel very proud. But I'd like to talk today about one of

those unsung heroes, a man who, like so many immigrants to this province, makes quiet contributions that have helped build his community. Those efforts make places like Brockville and Leeds-Grenville not only better places for newcomers like himself, but for everyone who lives there.

You won't find the name of Reg Francis in the headlines back in Leeds-Grenville too often, but that doesn't mean that he hasn't made a lasting impression since arriving in Brockville in 1963. He didn't actually come to Canada straight from Jamaica; he had a short stay in England before realizing this country offered him more opportunity. His wife, Beryl, joined him a year later and together they raised six children in the city of Brockville. Vivianne, Yvonne, Lorraine and Warren now live here in the city of Toronto; Winston and Colin reside in Brockville. I'm very proud that when Winston was a young lad—and I was young too; I had a long curly Afro back then—I actually coached Colin in soccer. He was a great kid and I really enjoyed his company on the sidelines. He made me laugh a lot.

Mr. Mike Colle: What happened to your Afro?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I can't see you in an Afro.

Mr. Steve Clark: I had a big Afro; yes, literally. It was quite long. My kids say it's nasty now when they see a picture of it.

Reg operates a well-known welding shop with his son Colin, and in the past they've had up to eight employees working for them. Reg Francis didn't come to Canada looking for a job; he came here and created work for other Canadians.

Perhaps his greatest legacy, though, is his involvement in the Brockville and district multicultural festival. Many people are surprised to learn that Brockville has been a host to a multicultural festival that will celebrate its 30th anniversary next May. Reg Francis was at the table back in 1981 when the idea first was born, and he's been a central part of the organization ever since. It's one of the highlights in my riding, where up to 5,000 people come to sample food, purchase crafts and watch the entertainment provided by dozens of ethnic groups. It's a true melting-pot experience where we celebrate so much diversity coming together under the Canadian flag.

I know I always make sure that I attend the Caribbean booth, and I must say, I always enjoy a little libation and I always have a couple of patties. But every time I go there, one thing remains the same: that's the entire Francis family working at that booth, because every year, the family comes together to celebrate their roots, to work in that booth, and they'll never forget their commitment to both Jamaica and now their home country of Canada.

1440

Reg Francis was also a founder of the Brockville Lions steel band, which is a popular feature in parades all over eastern Ontario. By taking something from his culture, Reg Francis has helped hundreds of Brockville and area children gain some understanding of Caribbean culture and develop some musical talent. There's no

question that Reg is a proud Canadian, a proud Ontarian, but I'm sure that there's a stirring pride in Reg every August when he sees that black, green and gold Jamaican flag flying on Brockville's waterfront in honour of his homeland's independence day.

Flying the flag of other nations to celebrate their national days is a great tradition in the city of Brockville, one that I'm proud started when I was the mayor of that city many years ago. Every month—

Applause.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you. Every month, new flags are displayed on flagpoles over the city's historic railway tunnel, a sign to visitors that Brockville embraces people from all over the world.

I know Reg was delighted when he was told about the motion from the member for Scarborough–Rouge River. He was very pleased. I'm delighted to stand here, not just as an MPP but also to talk on behalf of the people in my riding, like Reg Francis, and to support this motion to recognize August 6 as Jamaican Independence Day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Hon. Margarett R. Best: I certainly am pleased to rise in the Ontario Legislature today to speak on this motion. First of all, I want to take this opportunity to welcome all guests who are here today to the Ontario Legislature.

As an Ontarian of Jamaican birth, I am honoured to speak in support of this motion, which, if carried, would proclaim August 6 of each year Jamaican Independence Day in Ontario.

The passage of this motion would allow us to remember and recognize Jamaica's independence in the Ontario Legislature and to highlight the outstanding achievements and positive contributions of Jamaican Ontarians. I thank the member for Scarborough–Rouge River for bringing forward this motion, and I congratulate those who are working tirelessly to bring this to fruition.

Jamaica and Canada share a common heritage, both being members of the British Commonwealth. Since 1776, hundreds of thousands of Jamaicans have made Canada and this great province their home, and it certainly is a home away from home, the land of their birth, Jamaica—land of wood and water.

As of 2001, 3.5% of the city of Toronto's population and 3.2% of the population of the greater Toronto area was Jamaican born. While most Jamaican Ontarians live in Toronto and the greater Toronto area, many live and work across the province. Ontarians of Jamaican heritage have left an indelible mark on our society and are a vibrant and integral part of the wonderful mosaic that is Ontario.

Many Jamaican Ontarians and persons of Jamaican heritage have served Canada throughout its history and, in instances, they made the ultimate sacrifice to preserve our freedoms and our ways of life. Many have left a great impression on our province, including Herb Carnegie, the first black hockey player to play in the NHL; Denham Jolly, president of Milestone Communications, a friend

and a pioneer of Canada's first urban radio station; Michael Lee-Chin, entrepreneur extraordinaire, whose gracious donations of \$30 million to the Royal Ontario Museum and \$10 million to the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto have greatly enriched the province's arts and academic communities.

For decades, Jamaicans from all walks of life have settled and continued to settle in Ontario. They came as domestic servants, farm workers, labourers, students, nurses, teachers, artisans and trained professionals. Many have risen to the top in their fields of endeavour, and many have made enormous sacrifices that have allowed me and others to enjoy our freedoms and opportunities. It is with great humility that I take this opportunity to thank them.

Jamaicans tend to have a can-do attitude, and are hard-working and committed to excellence. We have a Jamaican patois saying which translates to: We are small, but we are strong.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Wait a minute. We're small.

Hon. Margarett R. Best: Like me, you know.

It is with that indomitable spirit that Jamaicans like me have embraced life in Ontario. It is with that spirit that Bromley Armstrong so bravely promoted equal rights for blacks and West Indians in Canada, and, in response to delegations to the Ontario Legislature which he was involved in, Ontario passed two laws: the Fair Employment Practices Act and the Fair Accommodations Practices Act; that Lincoln Alexander, a World War II veteran, became Lieutenant Governor of Ontario; that Dr. Avis Glaze excelled internationally in her role as an educator and community leader.

It is with that spirit that Ben Johnson and Donovan Bailey, great Olympic sprinters, blazed down the track and became two of the most famous athletes in the world; that Delores Lawrence, an Ontario business leader, dared to be her own boss and blazed a trail in business; and the late Louise Bennett Coverley entertained with both audacity and charm as she spread the rich Jamaican culture through her poetry, singing and cultural activism. She showed us how to appreciate and embrace our rich history and culture.

With this spirit, Stanley Grizzle, who is here in the Legislature with us today, became the first black Canadian candidate to run for an election to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario in 1959. Welcome, Mr. Grizzle.

We all remember the keen intellect and grace of our former colleague, Alvin Curling, former Speaker of this honourable House; and we remember Mary Anne Chambers, the first Jamaican-born woman to be elected to this Legislature.

Ontario is known for its multiculturalism and, certainly, being of Jamaican heritage, this is a concept I am intimately connected with because Jamaica's motto, "Out of many, one people," echoes this inclusiveness. As I go about my constituency and across Ontario, I see Jamaican restaurants alongside those of other ethnic communities. I hear the lilt of the Jamaican accent, which I love, among the melody of the various voices. I hear the strains of

reggae music and of course my favourite, like my colleague, Bas Balkissoon, One Love by legendary Jamaican-born Bob Marley, one of the greatest musicians of all time.

I am proud that the stories and contributions of Jamaican Ontarians are not just mine but are ours collectively. Ontarians can take pride in the fact that this province has been so welcoming to those of us in search of a better life. It has allowed Jamaican Canadians to make great contributions to this province. This is a legacy of Jamaican-born Ontarians; the legacy we want Ontarians to talk about, to write about; the legacy we want to set as an example for our children; the legacy we want our children to live; and the legacy we want to continue. This is the legacy that defines us and drives us.

I encourage my colleagues on all sides of the House to join with the member from Scarborough–Rouge River and myself in having Jamaican Independence Day, August 6, proclaimed in our great province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: How do I follow that, but to say, “Let’s get together and feel all right”—the words of Bob Marley.

I don’t see how anybody in this Legislature could not vote in favour of the private member’s motion to proclaim August 6 of each year Jamaican Independence Day. The member from Scarborough–Rouge River has done something that is long overdue for the province of Ontario, long overdue in this assembly.

1450

It’s rather interesting. Over the course of any given year, we in this place discuss commemorating one ethnicity’s background or another—an independence day from Jamaica; more recently, Italian Heritage Month. It amazes me that we’re here in 2010, almost 2011, and it’s taken us this long to commemorate the contribution of Jamaican Canadians, or Canadians of Jamaican origin, given the fact that, when with you look at the range of immigrants that we have who come from all over the world, Jamaicans were some of the first Canadians to establish here in this place. Jamaican Independence Day is celebrated every August 6, as the member has said, and it recognizes the date on which that nation received its independence from Great Britain in 1962. We share a heritage with Jamaica; we always have.

Prior to being granted full independence, Jamaica had, over a period of several years, gained greater freedom while remaining under the rule of the United Kingdom. In 1958 it was declared a province in the Federation of the West Indies. It left the federation upon earning its full independence, and the nation remains, as does Canada, a member of the British Commonwealth.

Jamaica’s connection to the British Empire began in the 17th century, when the British wrested it away from Spanish control. The first Jamaicans to come to Canada were known as the Maroons, and about 500 arrived in Nova Scotia in 1796. Basically, beyond the native people—the aborigines of Canada were the first Can-

adians, and amongst them were Jamaicans. It’s not something recent; it goes back a very long way. Declaring August 6 Jamaican Independence Day in Ontario is an opportunity to recognize this significant achievement by a young nation with historically strong ties to Canada in general, and very particularly here in Ontario.

I’ve been to Jamaica myself many times, and the first thing you notice, if you’ve gone to a number of Caribbean islands, is the lushness, the greenness and the very unique aspect of that particular part of the Caribbean. It’s not a repetitive island; it’s an originating island. So when you talk about reggae, when you talk about ska, that kind of music, you’re talking about rhythms that are mimicked everywhere but came from Jamaica. Whenever I hear a Bob Marley song, I think immediately of Jamaica. Whenever I hear Hot, Hot, Hot played at a party, it makes me want to dance, and again I think of Jamaica.

Mr. Dave Levac: I just got a visual.

Mr. Peter Shurman: No. That visual you don’t want, sir.

Recently, I co-sponsored a bill, as I mentioned before, with the members from York West and Trinity–Spadina in which we declared June Italian Heritage Month. It was passed with unanimous support that day. I did that for the same reason that I am supporting my friend from Scarborough–Rouge River. I think what we have here is a crucible in the chemistry lab that we call Ontario, and it’s a great experiment and an experiment that’s bearing success. I represent a riding of tremendous diversity—about 150 different ethnicities and backgrounds—and it certainly includes Jamaican Canadians. What we need to do here, whenever we have that opportunity, is to offer appropriate recognition to the places and to the cultures from which our newer Canadians come. In the case of Jamaicans, many are newer Canadians; as I have mentioned, many were here for 200-plus years. So I say again, this is long overdue. In the case of Jamaicans who have been part of the Canadian mosaic for a very, very long time, it is indeed long overdue. Let’s have an irie day and do this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I’ll be supporting the motion moved by the member from Scarborough–Rouge River in the same way that I supported his Bill 207, An Act to name February in each year Black History Month.

It is a time to talk about contributions. Usually, it’s the time to talk about famous people, which is nice. Given that 85% of the total Canadian population of Jamaicans is here in Ontario, that’s a big deal, and it’s an interesting fact that we want to highlight.

I agree with everything that Minister Best and the member from Scarborough–Rouge River and all the other members said. There are the famous names to mention, including Royson James, who went to Harbord Collegiate with me, although at the time we didn’t know each other very well—good writer.

Somebody, of course, mentioned Lincoln Alexander, one of my favourite Tories. One of my favourites, and

there aren't that many that I can name. There are some nice ones at the provincial level who will remain nameless. Joe Clark is another person I like a lot. A tiny little perfect mayor, I liked very much. But in this case it's Lincoln Alexander.

I include Alvin Curling as one of my friends. I also had Dr. Louise Bennett Coverley, who was mentioned, affectionately known by her stage name, Ms. Lou. She was Jamaica's foremost and most renowned folklorist, writer and storyteller. Dwight Drummond I know very well, and we meet with him from time to time when there's a Boss sale on clothing; I thought I would reveal that for the record. A lot of famous folks have been mentioned. Michael Lee-Chin wasn't mentioned, but everyone knows Michael.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Yes, he was. I mentioned him.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Did you mention him?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Yes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Well, there you go. Just in case.

You mentioned Stanley Grizzle who I've known. He might forget me from time to time, but I don't forget him. The area of Bloor Street between Spadina and Brunswick is often where we meet each other.

The point is that we have a tendency to talk about famous people, and we tend to forget the contribution of everybody else.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, of course, but with all due respect to all you famous people, let's not forget the multitudes who make a big contribution day in and day out who are never mentioned. Those are the people who sweat night and day. The countless women who work at two or three jobs to make ends meet, those are the real heroes for me. Ms. Best, were you one of them?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Yes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Those are the heroes for me in terms of the contribution they make on a daily basis because that's not easy to do.

Often, in the midst of celebrating the good things, we forget other issues that are important to me. I want to mention a quote by Rosemary Sadlier. This is a good quote, and I want to read it out. "When the contributions of people of African descent are acknowledged, when the achievements of black people are known, when black people are routinely included or affirmed through our curriculum, our books and the media, and treated with equality, then there will no longer be a need for Black History Month."

It's an important quote, because we want to remember who we are through Black History Month. We want to be able to remember the contribution that Jamaicans have made to this country since the 1780s—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: The 1790s.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Or the 1790s. But we cannot forget the tribulations that racialized communities face on a daily basis. We don't talk about that. In fact, we hardly ever have a motion or a resolution that speaks to racism

and how we deal with that, or racial profiling and how we deal with that, or streaming and why it happens in our school system and how we deal with that. We tend not to talk about those things.

So when we celebrated Italian Heritage Month last week, the three of us and many others that spoke to it, we all talk about the positive contributions that we made, that Jamaicans make, that everybody makes to build this country.

1500

But I want to always remind people of the difficulties we faced as Italians, because discrimination against Italians was big in those early years. I can't imagine what it was like in the 1920s; I know what it was like for Italian Canadians in the 1950s. But it's worse for racialized communities, and we need to talk about it so that we don't forget, and we need to talk about it so that we find a way to deal with it, because whether we like it or not, streaming still happens.

When I was a school trustee and we tracked students from grade 9 to the end of their high school career, we knew every year that racialized communities, black kids in particular, were being streamed and that many never went to university. We tracked that year after year. The question is, after 30 or 40 years that we know this, what are we doing about it? What do we do when we know?

When we had a number of black parents, mostly women, who said, "We need our own school," I was a big supporter of that. We have the first Africentric school in Toronto, and the Premier spoke against it. I understand the reasoning, but when you hear black parents saying, "Our kids are not doing well. We need to have a pilot school where we can show that our children can do well," when we hear that and we don't validate those concerns, we are on the wrong side of the issue.

For me, it was important to listen, validate what I heard and then say, "How do we deal with it?" Quite frankly, I don't want black schools, as I don't want all-Jewish schools. I don't want to see any kind of division by ethnicity. It is true that for a long time we've had Catholic schools in our system; that was constitutionally guaranteed. But I believe the English were quite happy to separate the French and give them their own schools, and there were political motivations for that. So we have a difficult history in relation to this.

But I'm not happy to segregate children by way of racialization and/or by way of different religions; I'm not happy with it. But it is important to validate the concerns of black parents. I guaranteed in my debates with people that those kids will do well, because those children and those parents and those teachers who are in that school will make success the key feature of that black school. They will show that it works, and it will work.

We're not going to be able to deal with discrimination and racism in the way I would like, but we should talk about it and we need to talk about it. Because if we don't do that, then all the multiculturalism stuff we talk about, from reggae to food, is just the nice stuff. It's like pasta is Italian. So what? In the end, if we don't maintain our

language—if you don't maintain the third languages—whatever roots we have to our past will disappear. Pasta will not hold us together. Pasta will not hold people together. It just won't. Not even pizza will hold us together, or that nice cheese on top of it.

I have a tendency to constantly make reference to problems that we still experience—that racialized communities still experience—that need to be dealt with. It would be lovely to hide it under the carpet and only talk about the good things and about the famous people who do well. But if we do that, we really forget some of the problems that many in our community are facing. It's just something I want to do each and every time, because if I don't do that, I won't feel good with myself.

I say positively on a good note that the Toronto board, for a long, long time, has had concurrent programs. We have had black heritage programs for as long as we can remember. But we're slowly losing our ability to provide appropriate funding so that those programs can continue. They're under threat continually, as are third languages in the Toronto board.

There's only about 15 to 17 schools that still provide concurrent programs and third-language learning. If we don't give them the support provincially, those programs will die. But I think they're good. I think it's good for us all that those programs continue because they're psychologically good and economically beneficial for us all.

Member from Scarborough—Rouge River, I support your motion; it's a nice motion. But we've got to talk about our challenges. We've got to talk about how we deal with it as MPPs, what we can do as MPPs to deal with the problem.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Speak to the Speaker.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, through you always, as I look at the member from Scarborough—Rouge River.

We need to face up to the challenges. We need to talk about what we're going to do in order for us to be proud about having this day that we will be celebrating from now on, because all three parties are going to be supporting this, and we all support it with pride.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I appreciate it.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister, it's a pleasure to support you from time to time, as it is a pleasure to support my friend from Scarborough—Rouge River in the memory of my good friend Alvin Curling, who I liked a great deal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: The harder they come, the harder they fall.

I just want to say that we are here today to praise Jamaica. We're here to reinforce the incredible contributions Canadians of Jamaican origin have made to our country, made to Toronto and made to Ontario. I think this is the time to talk about the incredible people that we're so fortunate to have in our communities. I'm very fortunate.

As you all know, I have the heart of Little Jamaica right in my riding. It's one of the most vibrant parts of the city. Talk about food—we don't just talk about food; we eat the food every day. We eat the cow's head soup. We eat the chicken-foot soup. We eat the ox tail. We eat the jerk chicken. Every night I drive home or walk home and smell the jerk chicken barbecuing on Eglinton. People are eating rice and peas, jerk chicken, jerk pork—ginger beer. It's happening. It's not just talk; we do it.

The music: It's not just Bob Marley. Well, we know Bob Marley is the Beethoven of the 20th century, but you've got to think of Dennis Brown, Jimmy Cliff. Get beyond Bob. There are so many. The Heptones: You've got to know about the Heptones. Leroy Sibbles used to hang around Eglinton Avenue. For years, Leroy was going back and forth between Eglinton and Kingston. These are the people we have to also mention and not minimize anybody.

The incredible places: There's Rap's, there's Randy's. The best patties anywhere in the universe: Randy's on Eglinton. Mainsha, a great and very successful franchise, is going all over the world; Jamaican food that is now being franchised, it's so good. There's the Ocean Grill on Dufferin.

Wisdom's barber shop: You want to talk about Italian barbers? Never mind. The Jamaican barbers, Wisdom's on Eglinton—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Open 24 hours a day.

Mr. Mike Colle: It's 24 hours. Go to Wisdom's and get your haircut. Go to the barbers on Eglinton; never mind the Italian barbers.

Anyways, there's so much to say here. It is good to be positive about an incredible country, the most beautiful of the islands you'll ever see. I wish I was there now. But anyway, we're here and we can dream about Jamaica.

God bless Louise Bennett Coverley. She walked the streets of Toronto. She loved Toronto. She loved Jamaica. Go down to Harbourfront. You can see the room we have for her on the second floor. Louise Bennett Coverley, God bless you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The honourable member for Davenport.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We don't have time for your book.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: You mentioned the book. Guess who is in here with a full page? It's Alvin Curling. He's in the book.

I want to congratulate the member from Scarborough—Rouge River. Obviously, all of us are going to agree that August 6 is going to be the big day.

I want to tell you, though, very briefly what happened in 1981. In 1981, I was approached by a man called Rupert James. Rupert James used to have a boarding house on 100 Cowan Avenue; you remember him? He was a Conservative. Now there was a chance for the Liberals and for the Conservatives to get together. The NDP wasn't there at that time.

What did we do in 1981? For the first time in the history of Canada, the great flag of Jamaica was raised at

city hall. That showed that there's great co-operation, because most people thought that Jamaicans arrived after 1960. But that's not true. Jamaicans had already arrived here in 1797.

So today, as we're here, and as our great friends are here today to help us celebrate this special day, I say to all of the Jamaicans who are here and making a great contribution, the flag should go up again because it shows to us a great symbol of a people who can come here and make a great contribution, who can come with their children and even make a better country and a better Canada. Long live Jamaica and long live Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Scarborough-Rouge River has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I want to thank all my colleagues, from Leads-Grenville, Thornhill, Trinity-Spadina, Eglinton-Lawrence, Davenport, and especially my colleague from Scarborough-Guildwood, who all added to this debate and provided the humour that went around the room. First of all, I want to thank everyone who is here in attendance today for joining us as we debate my motion. I just realized that Gloria Richards is in the east gallery. Gloria has served many, many Speakers of this Legislature, and she is of Jamaican background.

As my colleagues went around the room and started reminding all of us of the great contributions of Jamaicans to Canada, it reminded me that when I first arrived in Toronto as a young man, the Caribbean community was very small. I had the opportunity to hang out with a lot of Jamaican people and a lot of people from my own country, the islands of Trinidad and Tobago. They all forgot a great man who provided us with that blend of music between pop, rock, reggae and calypso: Byron Lee and the Dragonaires, a world-renowned orchestra that has travelled the world and has been on many ships across the Caribbean. All of us who arrived from the Caribbean were entertained by him year after year in this particular country.

We all have some close ties to the Jamaican community. They have definitely made a contribution to this province. They've made us a better province. As we celebrate diversity as the strength of Ontario, we need to celebrate the people from Jamaica, as we celebrate all the other ethnic communities in our province. I want to thank you for the opportunity and I hope we will all support this particular motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for this ballot item has expired. We'll vote on Mr. Balkissoon's item in about 50 minutes.

TAXATION

Mr. Steve Clark: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government should acknowledge that Ontario families do not have an infinite ability to pay for the Premier's energy experiments, stop the collection of secret energy taxes under section 26.1 of the Ontario Energy Board Act, and reimburse families the money they have already paid on secret energy taxes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Clark moves private member's notice of motion number 64. Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation. Mr. Clark.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm always proud to stand in this House to speak up for the residents of Leads and Grenville, who, like people right across this province, approach their mailboxes with fear at that time of the month when they expect their hydro bill to arrive.

You know, whenever I travel in my riding, people ask me to do exactly what I am proposing in this motion today: To stand up on their behalf and tell the McGuinty government that enough is enough. People, whether they be in Brockville, Westport, Lansdowne, Spencerville, Athens or everywhere in between, are demanding relief from this never-ending list of Liberal taxes and fees.

Oh, I know that members on that side of the House are going to stand up and tell me, "Wait a minute. We're giving people back 10%. We're giving them a 10% break on their hydro bills. Didn't you get one of those handouts that we passed out this week?" Those handouts that try to confuse and hide the truth. Only a government so out of touch and off track as this one could announce that electricity rates are going up 46% and then turn around and give people a 10% rebate and expect them to be grateful.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Bait and switch.

Mr. Steve Clark: Absolutely. No one is being fooled by this attempt to give with one hand and take away with another. You know, it reminds me of that story, the Grinch who stole Christmas. The Premier is like the Grinch who breaks into your house, takes your presents, your Christmas tree, your decorations, your kids' stockings, leaves the little lump of coal and expects you to have a merry Christmas.

Well, too many Ontario families struggling to make ends meet after seven years of this government's policies are not going to have a very good Christmas. That's why I'm standing up today for Ontario residents, who simply can't afford to dig deeper every time this government and this cabinet come up with another crazy energy scheme.

Earlier today, my colleague Mr. Yakabuski, the MPP for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, introduced his bill to repeal section 26.1 of the Ontario Energy Board Act. We all know that this Premier and this government love taxes; in fact, the only thing they love more than taxes is spending money, which, of course, is the reason why they love more taxes. We're calling today for section 26.1 to be repealed so that Premier McGuinty has one less way to access the wallets of hard-working Ontarians.

You know, the energy minister is going to deny that the government is using the so-called special purposes fund to secretly tax Ontarians; in fact, he says that they've been scrapped. But it's interesting that just a few days after the energy minister repeated those claims, his cabinet colleague the Attorney General was at an Ontario Energy Board hearing to defend them. Talk about a mixed message.

So what we're trying to do today is provide some clarity for Ontarians, both in my motion that's on the

floor now and also Mr. Yakabuski's bill. It's calling on the Premier to do three simple things: (1) acknowledge that Ontario families do not have an infinite ability to pay for his energy experiments; (2) stop the collection of secret energy taxes under section 26.1 of the Ontario Energy Board Act; and (3) reimburse Ontario families for the money that they've already paid out in secret energy taxes. Those are three simple things that the Premier can do today to show Ontario families that he understands how his costly energy experiments, smart meter tax machines and sweetheart Samsung deal have made electricity a luxury item in the province.

We talk a lot in this place about the rising cost of energy and how Ontarians actually tremble with the thought of tearing open their hydro bills to see how high the bottom line has soared this month, and it's funny that it's not just the price of the actual power that has so many people—they stop and talk to me on the street, they call me, they email my constituency office—so upset every single solitary day. It's not just the price of the actual power; it's the other ways that they've been gouged by this government on their hydro bill. It literally gets their blood boiling.

1520

I have to tell you about two great supporters of mine, Mike and Dana Purcell, who own and operate Purcell's Freshmart in Mallorytown. Never one to shy away from expressing her opinion, Dana called my office last week after faxing in her latest hydro bill to my office.

Dana told my staff, "You can tell Steve he has my permission to use our names and show our bill at Queen's Park any time he wants, if it will help get someone in this government to listen."

Actually, let me quote her note on the fax: "Please feel free to use our hydro bill to hammer home the point that McGuinty and his government have botched the hydro delivery system." That's what she wrote.

It's hard for them. It's hard, running a grocery store. It's folks like Dana and Mike who really make this province's economy work. They provide jobs, pay taxes, raise great kids and contribute to the community in which they live to make it a better place, which is why, for them, it's so frustrating when they crack open that hydro bill and see how their bill came—on their last bill, \$4,113.93 cents. I couldn't believe it; four grand. They're business people, so you know what? They expect to pay for a service. And the \$1,858 they owed for electricity is a hefty price, but that's what they used. They understand it has to be paid.

So what about the other \$2,255.22? That's where the Purcells' anger comes in. Here's how it breaks down: HST, \$470; debt retirement, \$260; delivery, \$905; provincial benefit, \$323; and—wait for it—regulatory charges, the area on the bill where Mr. McGuinty has his hidden tax, another \$271.

This bill tells the real story of why it's so hard right now for businesses and families to get ahead. It's right here in black and white. As Dana Purcell wrote, this bill hammers home the point that the McGuinty government has botched the energy file.

It's a bit ironic that I'm introducing the motion today. It takes me back to my first day in the Legislative Assembly, on March 22. Here I was, a rookie MPP, fresh off the campaign trail, full of energy, eager to take what I've heard from my constituents to the floor of Queen's Park and get the government to realize the error in its ways.

Well, I sure got an eye-opener that day. What was the big item of discussion in the House that day? It was the Premier's new, hidden hydro tax. I couldn't believe it. For weeks I'd listened to voters in my riding telling me at their doorsteps that they're tired of paying the taxes and fees implemented by this government and getting nothing in return. All the money they were sending to Toronto was just going to pay the bill for the Premier's latest boondoggle. They weren't seeing any better health care or education, just more waste and scandal.

As I listen to my colleagues here in the House, I ask myself: How can we possibly be debating the energy minister's plan to foist a \$53-million secret energy tax on hydro bills? How could the government be considering this, after the clear message I heard from folks in Leeds-Grenville, saying enough was enough?

I'm proud to say voters in my riding didn't buy your message on March 4. And considering that 76% of Ontarians say they want a new party in power, I can tell the Premier and his energy minister that it's not selling on doorsteps now.

The government can try to hide this tax and others, and I'm sure they are cooking something up right now. I just want to let families know—and again, I can't understand why the Premier didn't get the message. They sent a whole whack of their staff down to work in Leeds-Grenville. You sent a whole bunch of staff down there. Surely to goodness some of the people who sit behind the Speaker would have heard that message. I cannot believe it.

I want Ontario families to know that they can depend on PC leader Tim Hudak and PC MPPs like myself to continue to shine a light on the Premier's secret taxes until the voters are ready to flip the switch on the next government in the province of Ontario next year.

I'm pleased to be able to provide this motion. I look forward to the comments from the members opposite. I know that with the bill that the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke introduced today and with this motion that I've presented here this afternoon, we hope to hear from the other side.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the motion from the member from Leeds-Grenville. He invokes Dr. Seuss, so I'm going to return the favour. He wants to talk about Christmas and Dr. Seuss, let me talk about something else: Let's go back in time and debate Charles Dickens and the famous novel A Christmas Carol. It seems that the Ghost of Christmas Past wants to come and visit us. The Ghost of Christmas Past is eerily very similar to some of the ideas that this member wants to invoke, except for the fact that they

don't go on a time machine; there was no history before 2003.

What they forgot to talk to the people about in this particular resolution is taking us back to when we had the good old days; when coal usage went up 127% and the capacity to generate went down by 1,800 megawatts. That's the equivalent of literally shutting off Niagara Falls. To take lessons from these guys, from that time machine, and be told about our energy plan when they don't have one—and the one that they tried to apply cost us \$1 billion.

When they started to talk to us about the energy that didn't take place, what happened? Well, we started to pay a debt down by previous governments, and when we looked into the record, the money that was supposedly coming off the bills and being used to retire that debt could not be found in the budget of that government. It could not be found. It's interesting.

Let's talk about what they haven't heard. They haven't heard about a plan that was being brought forward that is a long-term plan, that has gotten the endorsement from several organizations, and I'll go through those in a minute. Job creation, energy security and clean air are the three hallmarks of what this plan is prescribing for us in the province of Ontario.

I want to come to something that the member harps about, and that is the people. Fair-minded people understand that you've got to pay for the process. What did they do? They froze the prices. What did that cost? It cost \$1 billion—\$1 billion.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Zap, you're frozen. Zap. Zap.

Mr. Dave Levac: It's interesting that we're getting cackling from the other side when you start telling the history that is absent from their discussions.

The clean energy benefit, which is being pooh-poohed by them: The clean energy benefit of 10% is going to come right off the bottom of your hydro bill for the next five years. That plan was voted down by that party introducing this motion. They voted against that plan to provide 10% discounts. I'm telling you, that benefit is going to go a long way to help people with that bill.

I want to make sure that we understand what the history is, so that as this Christmas narrative continues, we don't forget that Christmas past had some problems. That is, when the Harris government and the Eves government—and the member from Niagara West-Glanbrook, the Leader of the Opposition, happened to be in the government at that time—tried to deregulate and privatize Ontario's energy system and created nothing but total, complete chaos. If that was their plan, they made a really good plan. They created a mess. If it was their plan not to be able to understand how much that was going to cost—they put a freeze on it when they realized that it was going out the window. That's what cost the taxpayers a billion dollars. That's the plan, if there is one. That was then; this is now.

1530

History didn't exist with these guys. There was no problem before. We just inherited that problem. And we

made it, maybe; I don't know. But I've got to tell you, in terms of what they gave us to turn around, we've been giving you the response in terms of moving away from coal. Yes, 2014 will be the last time a piece of coal is burned for power in Ontario. That, to me, represents exactly what that government did: 127% increase in the use and losing 1,800 kilowatts of power while they were at it.

We've still got members on that side that are calling for coal. We've still got them calling for coal. Let them stand and defend it. Please, stand up and say, "Yes, we will continue burning coal." But what we do is we find little comments here and there.

Let me offer you just a little piece of proof that even some people begin to come back and say, "I do understand that there was a problem." This was a comment from the MPP from Niagara West-Glanbrook, who happens to be the leader of the party that's putting the motion forward. Here's what he said, October 20, 2010: "I think we paid a price for our energy policy in the previous government. Because we went and made a 180-degree turn."

What he's basically saying—one of the first times I've heard it—is that there was history before 2003. There was history, and it was a pretty bleak history. It was a history that yes, loved coal, did not have a plan and took money to pay back the debt on nuclear, and that money did not go on debt repayment.

The evidence was from the auditor, who said there were no payments. So where did that money go? There was no history. Now we've given a little bit of a history. My intention is to make sure that everybody understands that this motion is nothing but a Christmas joke.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to support my colleague from Leeds-Grenville on his motion here today. It's important to debate this, and it saddens me that my colleague opposite wouldn't take a more responsible view of what's happening in Ontario today.

I think the reality is, and if they took the time to meet constituents—and I understand that in their situation it's not that easy to actually go out and speak to the public at this point in time. Because if they had, as myself and our energy critic did last night at a round table with seniors—and we wanted to talk about the aging-at-home strategy, we wanted to talk about pension, we wanted to talk about the HST. But I need to assure my colleagues opposite that the number one issue that was coming up at that round table with our energy critic, Mr. Yakabuski, last evening was hydro rates and the resulting bills. If my colleagues opposite on the government benches had taken the time to actually consult with their constituents, they would understand that they have lost the confidence of the people of Ontario in dealing with this very important matter.

I'm going to read into the record a few things from my constituents because I believe that it's important. Linda Farr from Greely—Greely is a growing community in a

rural part of my riding with many young families and many seniors—says: “My hydro bill has gone from \$200 to almost \$400 in less than five months. Please stand up for us.” Linda, today Steve Clark and the Ontario PC Party are standing up for you.

I have Bill Ellam, who has contacted me: “A lot of your constituents, including myself, heat with hydro, and these bills are crippling us.” Bill Ellam has asked me to stand up for him and to stand up to this McGuinty Liberal government that believes, time and again, that they can continue to raise taxes on heat and hydro through sneaky backdoor levies that my colleague wants to shut down and that darn HST that we fought against in this Legislature and we will continue to fight that party on.

Gerald Watt of Nepean—as many of you know, Nepean–Carleton is my riding. The former city of Nepean, a great area of that, probably the majority of the old city of Nepean, is in my riding. Gerald says to me, “As a retired individual, every penny to me counts. The HST has hurt me as everything I buy has HST applied. I am going to tell you now that Dalton McGuinty has committed political suicide with his tax increases.” I think that’s probably why my colleague opposite wants to talk about Christmas past. He’s so stuck in the past that he has no regard for what his government is doing today to the taxpayers of this province.

There are seniors, like my friend Gerald Watt, who have to penny-pinch. While Mr. McGuinty is out on spending sprees with Samsung and IKEA—and he’s not buying furniture and he’s not buying radios; he’s subsidizing them for massive energy schemes that my friends, like Gerald Watt, are paying for.

Then I think of Fraser Wilton, who’s from Ottawa. He says this: “I am completely outraged at what [Mr.] McGuinty is doing with hydro and how he is effectively treating us like fools.” By the way, this is an aside and a sidebar from this quote that I’ll continue with, but I think that speaks to what Mr. McGuinty was doing with the Sussex report, where someone on that side had hired consultants to try to confuse Ontario voters about energy. That’s why you’ll always hear them say, “dirty coal” this, “clean green” this. Well, I’m going to tell you something: They’re not confusing people, because Fraser Wilton of Ottawa says he’s effectively treating us like fools. The people of Ottawa and the people of Ontario understand what this government is doing to them.

Fraser continues: “The reason for the increase in hydro rates is due to his promise to ‘green hydro’ and his sweetheart deals he is making with people and companies (including foreign nationals).

“This man has got to be stopped along with his minions that carry out his missions to treat us with a lack of respect.” I respectfully suggest that he’s talking about these minions across the way who want to revisit history in a way that completely disregards the truth.

This is a government that only looks through rose-coloured glasses, the way that they want Ontarians to see it. Well, the reality is, as my friend Fraser Wilton says, we will not be treated like fools no matter how much money you’re going to pay for Sussex Strategy Group.

Christine Goodwin—I mentioned the great village of Greely. It’s a rural community. It’s perfectly situated: 20 minutes to downtown, 20 minutes to the airport. It’s about an hour from the border with the United States and, of course, it’s actually even close to Leeds and Grenville, where my colleague is who put this bill forward. Christine says, “I just opened my monthly hydro bill from Hydro One. They have increased my monthly billing plan amount by 50%! These increases are outrageous.”

I need the members opposite, these Liberals, to think about this for a second. People don’t have an infinite supply of money to pay for Dalton McGuinty and his expensive energy schemes. They don’t have an infinite amount of money to continue to pay for the Niagara Parks Commission when they decide to go on a spending spree with the corporate card, which, by the way, is paid for in full by the taxpayers of this province. They don’t have time nor do they have the money to continue to spend on boondoggles like eHealth, Cancer Care Ontario or, everyone’s favourite, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. But that, sadly, is what’s happening. This government has given themselves the power through the Green Energy Act to increase hydro taxes via regulation. That’s what my colleague from Leeds–Grenville wants to stop in its tracks. He believes, as well as everyone in the Ontario PC caucus, that if you’re going to bring through a tax, you should have the guts to put it through this Legislature. But we’ve seen time and again that this government doesn’t have the guts.

This is the second tax in one year that they decided to put through regulation. Let me remind you the other tax was that eco tax, that eco tax that went so wrong that they had to rescind it. But they still haven’t paid over \$85 million in taxpayer dollars from consumers in this province back to those consumers.

The reality is energy utilities are going to be forced to collect this new, hidden hydro tax from an additional charge on hydro bills. The McGuinty government used this regulation to impose a \$53-million energy tax last March. Think about that.

1540

My friends opposite want to talk about rhetoric and want to mock people who celebrate Christmas, but it’s becoming tougher for people across this province to make ends meet. Can you imagine if you were the father, the breadwinner of your family, in a community? You work hard to play by the rules; you volunteer at your kids’ sports. All you want to do is pay those bills, make sure there’s money in your children’s education fund and make sure that, like in the good old days, you have a little bit of money not only to put some turkey on the table but some presents under the tree.

I’m going to tell you something: This government and the policies they’ve embarked upon have made that more difficult for people who live outside this Legislature. That’s why we’re standing up for them today.

No public notice—no public notice—was given of this tax increase. The regulation did get routinely posted on March 17, only to be hurriedly pulled down shortly after

a Toronto Star reporter began asking questions. That's how much they wanted to hide this tax increase from the public.

We're not alone, Mr. Speaker. I know you have travelled this province extensively. You've worked hard on behalf of the people of Ontario, and you have heard what I have heard. Whether it's the secret G20 law that that cabinet put in place, whether it is the eco tax that was shoved through by regulation—of course we saw later on that they rescinded that after the public outcry—and again right here: a tax increase regulation that did not hit the Ontario Legislature. Why? Because they didn't want to deal with the public backlash. But the problem is, they got caught. The only fools in here sit on the opposite side of the aisle.

I want to talk a little bit more about section 26.1. It is schedule D of the Green Energy Act. As you will recall, Speaker, at the time, this party stood tooth and nail and fought every inch of the way against that Green Energy Act because we knew it was going to have catastrophic effects for the Ontario taxpayer.

The Liberals gave themselves the power in that act to have electricity utilities collect revenue to fund Ministry of Energy conservation programs. Ontario regulation 66/10 names a specific dollar amount of \$53 million to be collected under section 26.1. Where is that money going, why is it going to them and why did they not tell the Ontario public what they did?

As I have a few minutes left, I want to talk about the eco fees again, and I think it's important. Over the summer, people across Ontario rose up. They did it by calling their MPP and by calling the media, and in many cases they actually travelled to Ottawa to protest to Premier Dalton McGuinty.

Let me quote Debbie Jodoin, who is part of a protest group against the Dalton McGuinty Liberals. She said: "We are protesting because this government backtracked on the eco tax implementation to do damage control for an ill-conceived plan. Ontarians still have not received a penny back on all these fees we were charged between July 1 and July 20. Ontarians have been ripped off by the eco fees. We want our money back, and we deserve our money back. It is ridiculous and unacceptable for any government to do this to the taxpayers. It is not your money; it is our money."

That is exactly the sentiment that my colleague from Leeds-Grenville is fighting for today. He wants to ensure that people like Debbie Jodoin, Gerald Watt, Bill Ellam, Linda Farr, Fraser Wilton and Christine Goodwin have somebody standing for them in the Ontario Legislature to stop this McGuinty government from its increased taxation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I came to the House today, I have to tell you, somewhat confused, not about the government's energy policy, because I think we all understand and lament it very much, but about the actual wording of this motion. I don't want to be a grammarian, but I think

the honourable member needed to insert some colons and numbers and a few other things to make it readable.

If I might suggest what the honourable member is actually trying to say—he writes, "That, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government should acknowledge that Ontario families do not have an infinite ability to pay for the Premier's energy experiments, stop the collection of secret energy taxes...." What he's saying is that Ontario families do not have the ability, or an inability, to stop the collection of secret taxes.

I'm suggesting that isn't what he's trying to say. I'm suggesting what he is trying to say and should have said—and perhaps he can say this in his final rebuttal—is at the end of the word "should" in the first line—there should be a colon, and then, following that, there should be a list of (a), (b), (c) or (1), (2), (3) on the three separate points, so that in fact it is grammatically correct and that he's trying to make three points.

I would surmise that is what is intended here, and I'm going to speak to that, but the wording of this as written is meaningless. I hate to tell you that, but the wording of this motion is meaningless, and if I were to vote for it, I would be voting for something that does not make sense. I'm asking the member if perhaps he can clear this up when it goes back and write it in a grammatical fashion which is logical and can be followed.

I'd like to speak about the three points. He's trying to make three points, I believe. The first one is that ordinary citizens of Ontario do not have an infinite ability to pay taxes, and I think that's a point that can be very well made. No one has that kind of infinite ability to pay taxes as they increase and increase unless there is a commensurate ability to raise one's wages or one's sources of revenue at least at the same rate as the taxes are increasing, because there will come a point, as there is today, where people's wages are not increasing to the same amount as the costs, and therein lies the rub and the difficulty in Ontario.

The second thing I think the member is trying to say is that the government should stop its secret energy taxes, and on this I would have very little to quibble with him, because the taxes that have been introduced in this province have been done in a very secretive way. I start with the HST. Up until a week or so before the HST was announced by the Premier, there were denials by this government that anything of the sort was being contemplated. All the while, the finance minister was in Ottawa with his counterpart, James Flaherty, sitting down and hammering out the deal and signing the deal secretly, unbeknownst to the whole population of this province, including the entire population on the back bench of that government. I think there were no people more surprised than opposition members. If there were, the only people who would probably be more surprised are the members sitting there on the back bench when this was unfolded and told to them that it was a fait accompli and that it was going to be part of the budget speech the next morning. It was really a secret energy and secret deal made around taxation, just as the eco tax was.

I remember my shock and surprise going into the Canadian Tire store in Amherstburg to buy some paint. I was there just to buy a gallon of paint, and when I took the paint up, the person told me that there was HST, which I had come to expect would probably be on the gallon of paint—it was a little bit after July—but he also told me that there was a new eco tax on it. He said, “This has been imposed by the province of Ontario,” and I looked quizzically at him and said, “Are you sure? I’m a member of the Ontario Legislature and I don’t remember anybody passing an eco tax on paint.” I said, “Are you sure about this?” and he brought out some regulation or something that had been sent from Canadian Tire headquarters and showed it to me, and sure enough, there was an eco tax.

You can imagine the surprise and chagrin that I had—and I’m sure all members of this Legislature would have—to find out that that had been secretly imposed without a single word of debate in this House, and if I was angry, let me tell you, the people of Ontario were far more angry than I was for having to pay a few cents eco tax on a gallon of latex paint; they were livid. And this government was forced, in very short order, to back down on what had been a very, very foolish implementation plan.

1550

This is also, of course, this government’s own record on the wasting of billions of dollars of taxpayers’ money, everything from eHealth to the Oakville gas plant. I don’t think there was ever such an ill-conceived and silly idea by this government as to put a gas plant in downtown Oakville, within a few hundred metres of homes and schools and factories and businesses and places where people congregate, along a busy highway. It was one of the singularly dumbest ideas that was ever floated in this Legislature. I’m glad that the people of Oakville came to their senses. I’m glad the people of Oakville hired Erin Brockovich and did all the things that they did in order to have this killed.

But at the same time, I’m ever so mindful, as is the member from Oakville, that one day the government is going to have to pony up and is going to have to pay for this big mistake, because contracts were signed with TransAlta. Contracts were signed and legalisms were undertaken, and one day, somebody is going to have to pay for all this. But I would hazard a guess that this is going to be well hidden and is not going to become public and come to light until some magical day shortly after October 6, 2011, because on that day and only on that day is it going to be revealed how much it is going to cost the people of Ontario to have done, finally, what is right, but to have started off on such a wrong-headed, chaotic approach by saying that the energy was absolutely needed.

You know, when I listen to this government on energy, I have to say a very good French expression: “Mon oeil!” In English it means “my eye,” but it means much more than that; it’s like this is totally unbelievable, disbelievable. You have a government and ministers one

day saying that the lights are all going to go out and that we need this hydro and we need these sources of energy and Ontarians are so desperate to have them. They show you charts and they tell you that this is all going to happen unless you follow their economic and social and hydro plans. Then, the next day, they can turn right around, as they did in Oakville, and say that the energy is not necessary after all.

So I think the member from Leads—Grenville was a little bit on to something: the secret energy taxes, the secret energy consultations, the secret, secret everything that’s going on around here.

On the last thing he’s asking for I do have a bit of a problem, because I don’t know how it would possibly be undertaken. He has asked that the people be reimbursed for the taxes. Now, I don’t know how I would go about, unless I still have all those bills and people have all those bills of all those things they bought on the eco tax—to go back to the Canadian Tire store, to go back to Home Depot, to Home Hardware, to Sears or whatever places they bought them in the first place and say, “I want the tax reimbursed.” Because every single store levied the tax in a different way. Nobody understood it. I don’t know how you could possibly ever go back and say, “I want the taxes.” Some stores will say, “We didn’t charge any on that.” Some stores would say, “We charged twice that much on that particular item, but none on this one over here.” It was done in such a haphazard fashion and taken out so fast, I’m unsure how the member from Leads—Grenville anticipates that we are going to take back or be able to reimburse those taxes.

One of the members earlier, the member from Brant, talked about Charles Dickens. He is, in fact, one of my favourite authors.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Send them a lump of coal.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, no, no. I think what he said was “a pox on all the lawyers;” I think that was his best one.

But what A Christmas Carol said and what the character Scrooge undertook was not just going into the future. The character went to see his past, he went to see his present and he went to see his future. When he went to see his past, he lamented on what he had missed in his boyhood, how he had been treated, how he had become the man he had become and was very uncomfortable with. When he saw the present, he saw all of those people in the past who had better lives than his, even though they may not be rich like he was, people who helped the poor. He saw his fiancée at one point. When he saw the future, that was the ghost. I remember Alastair Sim most especially, a brilliant actor, saying, “This is the ghost I fear most of all,” because he feared what was going to happen in the future.

Perhaps that’s what the Liberals should be thinking about here today, too. Perhaps they should be looking at the ghost of Christmas future and what is likely to happen to them unless they lament their ways, because if they lament their ways, as Scrooge did, there is a much brighter future. He was able to change his ways. He was

able to save Tiny Tim. He was able to do all of those things and be revered by the people because they changed their ways because they saw the ghost of Christmas future.

I'm asking the government members over there to see that ghost, see that it's not too late to change, that you can be better people. I'm asking you to look at that and say that if you follow that path, you're going to find a wind-blown political grave with blowing around and nobody even willing to come to the funeral service unless they are properly fed. I think you'll remember that scene as well.

What I'm saying is that the member from Leeds-Grenville has brought forward something I think is reasonable. I hope he amends it. I hope he makes it grammatically correct, and I hope he explains to all of us how he intends to reimburse those taxes, because there's little or no record of them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased to stand up and speak on this motion from the member from Leeds-Grenville. I like the member, but when I looked at his motion, I couldn't find anything important to support. I looked at it from top to bottom, inside and out, and I couldn't find anything tangible to support, just a bunch of words put together talking about a secret deal and secret taxes. I don't know what he was talking about.

Anyway, I listened to the many members who spoke before me. At least for the people of Ontario we have a plan for energy. We have a vision for energy for the province of Ontario. We have a plan. The opposite side has no plan, just a bunch of rhetoric. They talk about politics, talking about this and this and this.

The member from Brant spoke for many minutes and explained to the people of Ontario that, before 2003, we didn't have a sufficient supply of energy for the people. We were short more than 2,000 megawatts. That's why we had the blackout. The price was an artificial price for many years, and it was costing the taxpayers of Ontario \$1 billion on a yearly basis.

The bill has three components to it: You have the price, you have the debt retirement and you have the taxes. Either you have a real price and you eliminate the debt retirement, or you have an artificial price and increase the debt retirement, which is what the other party did for many years. They increased the debt from \$6 billion from \$19 billion to \$20 billion.

We have to be honest with ourselves. We have to build a vision for the people of Ontario. We have to put a real price on the table for the people of Ontario. We have to offer incentives and tell them, "If you conserve, you can save money."

We have introduced smart meter technology for the people of Ontario. We have to introduce the latest technology to run our energy in the province of Ontario. It's important for all of us and for the future of this province.

I listened to the member from Beaches-East York talking about a plan and a vision and how it's not too late

for us to correct our vision. But you know what? We have no secrets here. Everything is open. We have a plan printed. You can go to the website and see it. There is also a booklet where you can read the details about our plan for the next 20 years, how we see the province of Ontario producing hydro, whether clean energy hydro from solar and windmills, renewables from methane or gas and how we are going to eliminate coal generation in the province because it causes our people a lot of pain, it makes them sick and causes a lot of deaths in Ontario. That's what our plan is.

Also, we understand that people are going through a tough time. That's why we introduced a 10% reduction on every bill, to support the families of this province, the hard-working people of the province of Ontario.

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Besides that, our strategy for energy in the province of Ontario is not just about producing clean energy; it's about creating jobs. I have a huge list. If we're talking about creating jobs: Windsor, 300 jobs; Tillsonburg, 300 jobs; 375 jobs in Windsor; in Guelph, 800 jobs; Kingston, 1,200 jobs; Oakville, 200 jobs; Welland, 1,000 jobs—jobs everywhere as a result of our plan, our strategy for clean energy for the people of Ontario. Why doesn't the opposite party talk about this? Show us your plan; I'll support it tomorrow. Show me that you have a tangible plan; I'll support it tomorrow.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Show us the money that you wasted in eHealth.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: We did show you our plan. Our plan is open. Our plan is clear. You can see it anytime on the website. If you want a booklet, I can supply you with a booklet to tell you how we see our energy, not for tomorrow, not for next year, but for the next 20 years. That's why many people from everywhere on the whole planet are coming to Ontario: to learn from our strategy; to learn about our strategy for clean air.

That party lives in the dark, and they want the people of Ontario to live in the dark. This party belongs to the old era, and we now live in the 21st century, the century of technology, which we introduced to the people of Ontario. We want people to live happy and healthy. That's why we introduced clean energy. Clean energy is a perfect fit to attract more companies to help open Ontario—enough supply for everyone who wants to open a factory, enough for every household in the province of Ontario. Besides that, we're going to create 50,000 jobs for the people of Ontario to enjoy and maintain our prosperity.

I've spoken enough. Many people spoke before me. I'd like to support the member, but he didn't offer anything to support. I'm sorry, my friend. You know what? Hopefully, next time, when you introduce a bill, a tangible benefit to me as the member for London-Fanshawe or the people of Ontario, I'll be willing to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Leeds-Grenville has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to acknowledge the members for Brant, Nepean–Carleton, Beaches–East York and London–Fanshawe—

Interruption.

Mr. Steve Clark: —as the trumpets play outside the Legislature.

I'm very pleased to provide a couple of comments, and I appreciate some of the wordsmithing advice from the member for Beaches–East York.

I think it was very clear that, whether it be the bill that the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke introduced today, or the motion, what we're trying to do on this side of the House is acknowledge that enough is enough.

I believe the motion was extremely clear. It talked about three things—and I appreciate the member beside me asking for some clarity. The fact that people do not have an infinite ability to pay for whatever this government feels is appropriate, the fact that there is this provision in section 26.1 of the Ontario Energy Board Act that this government could clear up very easily by removing that section, by stopping that—I'm not talking about the past, I'm not talking about energy plans or some of the other things that are brought up but the fact that people have an expectation that they want to break.

Quite frankly, the third item asking for reimbursement of monies that have been paid under this secret energy plan—the money should be given back to people. The frustration out there, the fact that people feel that enough is enough—the member for Nepean–Carleton talked about what we've been hearing in our corner of the province, and it's the same everywhere we travel, no matter where in the province of Ontario. People are fed up, and come October 6, 2011, they're going to flip the switch on that government right there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

HAWKINS GIGNAC ACT (CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS), 2010 LOI HAWKINS GIGNAC DE 2010 (DÉTECTEURS DE MONOXYDE DE CARBONE)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will first deal with ballot item number 55, standing in the name of Mr. Hardeman. I ask members to take your seats, please.

Mr. Hardeman has moved second reading of Bill 69, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 to require carbon monoxide detectors in all residential buildings.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Hardeman?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, refer it to the committee on general government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Shall this be referred to the committee on general government? So ordered.

JAMAICAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 56.

Mr. Balkissoon has moved private member's notice of motion number 57. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

TAXATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ballot item number 57.

Mr. Clark has moved private member's notice of motion number 64. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

In accordance with the agreement of the House earlier today, the vote is deferred until deferred votes on Monday, December 6, 2010.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1606.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington-Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering-Scarborough East / Pickering-Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia-Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough-Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margarett R. (LIB)	Scarborough-Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion and Sport / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé et du Sport
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre délégué à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma-Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham-Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton-Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
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Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax-Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale-High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Dunlop, Garfield (PC) Elliott, Christine (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Oakville Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP) Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Nickel Belt Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB) Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB) Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Dufferin–Caledon Newmarket–Aurora	
Kular, Kuldip (LIB) Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	Welland Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) Leal, Jeff (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Levac, Dave (LIB) MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Peterborough Brant	
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Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina Cambridge	
Mauro, Bill (LIB) McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord Thunder Bay–Atikokan Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
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Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
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Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London-Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
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Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial







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No. 79



Nº 79

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 39th Parliament

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Monday 6 December 2010

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Lundi 6 décembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
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Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 6 December 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 6 décembre 2010

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

WEARING OF BUTTONS

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear buttons in recognition of the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I'm delighted to welcome visitors from the most beautiful area of the province. Marcel and Laurencia Chatelain are from the french fries and poutine capital of Canada, the village of Alfred. Mr. Chatelain is a former mayor of Alfred and also a former county warden of Prescott and Russell. Welcome to our visitors. Bienvenue.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure today to introduce and welcome to the Legislature Strachan Heighington, the son of Wilfred Heighington, who was a former member of provincial Parliament first elected to the Ontario Legislature as a Conservative member in 1929 for the Toronto riding of St. David and re-elected in 1939. Prior to serving as an MPP, Wilfred Heighington served as a captain in World War I and fought in the Battle of the Somme and the battle of Vimy Ridge. He was also a lawyer and later appointed King's Counsel.

Mr. Strachan Heighington, like his father, is a lawyer and also has been appointed Queen's Counsel. He's joined here today by family members in the members' west gallery: Martha Heighington, Douglas Heighington, Andrew Heighington, Gerald Owen, and Robin and Mary Dickie. Please welcome them to the Ontario Legislature.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to introduce my friend Tess Hooks, who's here in the members' gallery. She is the mother of page Breana Hooks, who is doing such a wonderful job for us all.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity on behalf of the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and page William Boulter to welcome his mother, Jean Boulter, his father, Paul Boulter, and his brother James Boulter to the members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of the member from Wellington-Halton Hills and page Elizabeth Wilson, we'd like to welcome her aunt Anne Ruddy and her uncle Jim Ruddy to the members' gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

On behalf of the member from Kenora-Rainy River and page Kira Kuzemchuk, we'd like to welcome her mother, Michelle De Coninck, her father, Brian Kuzemchuk, her sister Corrin Kuzemchuk, her grandmother Rose Walker and family friend Charlie Ivan to Queen's Park today.

On behalf of the member from Windsor-Tecumseh and page Gabriella Howes, we'd like to welcome her mother, Jennifer Howes, her father, Bernard Howes, and her brothers, Benjamin Howes and Theodore Howes, to the Legislature today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today a delegation from the economic committee of the National Assembly of Vietnam, led by committee chairman Mr. Ha Van Hien.

Please join me in welcoming all our guests to the Legislature. It is a pleasure to meet with you today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. After seven years, the legacy of McGuinty government waste continues; in fact, it gets deeper and deeper. Take the rot at eHealth that the auditor exposed a year ago. You said you'd fix the problem; you failed to do so. We saw eHealth-style rot then spread to our hospitals and LHINs and the Ministry of Health.

Today, the auditor will report on casinos. As you know, the Ombudsman warned you some time ago about what cheaters were getting away with back in 2007, and the auditor had more to say about this in June of this year.

Premier, why should Ontario families have any confidence that you can change when your scandals keep having sequels? Why should we trust you to clean up your own growing messes?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question coming from my honourable colleague, but I would have thought he would want to speak about something that is very heavy and weighs on the minds of Ontarians, and that's jobs and the state of the economy.

I'm pleased to report that the November job numbers are out. We are now leading Canada, with 31,200 new

jobs; that's the strongest gain since June. The unemployment rate is at the lowest point it's been in almost two years. We've regained 87% of the jobs lost during the recession. Again, that compares favourably with the US, which has only regained 10% of their jobs. In the last two weeks alone, there were 2,700 new jobs announced.

We look forward to dealing with those in some detail when it comes to the supplementaries.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Obviously the Premier does not want to talk about his legacy of scandal and McGuinty waste. Premier, the problem is that your scandals have more sequels than Rambo, and each one gets worse as we come along. You say you're going to change the rules, but the same kind of waste keeps happening over and over again.

Since your eHealth and lottery and gaming corporation scandals, the auditor revealed that they kept handing out sweetheart deals at the Ministry of Health, the LHINs and OLG, and now at the Niagara Parks Commission.

Premier, in 2009 you were told that the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., MPAC, handed out \$11.4 million in sweetheart deals. The auditor has MPAC in his report today. Please tell us that your eHealth-style rot has not also spread to MPAC under your watch.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm always interested in the rhetoric, but I think Ontarians are more interested in reality.

Of course, the auditor will be speaking to a number of issues. We welcome his report, as we always have. We look forward to receiving his advice, and we look forward to acting on his recommendations, as we have a number of times in the past.

My friend says he is focused on efficiencies in government—I'll translate it that way. I'm pleased to report that Ontario has the fewest civil servants per capita in the country; we have the lowest per capita government spending in Canada; we are on track to reducing the size of the OPS by 5% or 3,400 full-time employees.

There was a time when the federal government collected corporate taxes and we collected corporate taxes. We've stopped doing that, and shortly we'll stop all sales tax collection as well. Those are two specific measures that my honourable colleague does not support.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Obviously the Premier is not interested in talking about a potential scandal at MPAC. I think families are getting sick and tired of seeing you wash your hands and say you'll do better, and then find out that the exact same scandal happens over and over again.

We saw it, Premier, with eHealth, and that spread to your LHINs, the Ministry of Health, as well as the hospitals themselves. We saw it at OLG, and we're going to hear more today. We saw it at MPAC, and I think, Premier, you are dodging because you know that eHealth-style rot has likely spread to MPAC as well.

1040

You've had seven years. The scandals happen over and over and over again, and nobody pays the consequence. The only way to bring change is to change the government itself. Premier, when will you learn your lesson?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It doesn't matter how you slice it or dice it: Rousing rhetoric is no substitute for a plan. We're pleased to put forward to the people of Ontario solid, substantive plans for bringing about real, measurable progress.

I'll stack up our progress against their rhetoric any day. Take a look at our schools: smaller classes, higher test scores, higher graduation rates. In health care, one million more Ontarians today have a doctor; wait times are down for MRIs, CTs, cataracts, cancer care, hips and knees, and also in our emergency rooms. We're the only province in Canada to have in place a plan to reduce emergency room wait times.

We're making progress. All those areas are specific areas of progress. The same applies to our economy; the same applies to our job count. Again, we'll put our plan up against their rousing rhetoric any day.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Sadly, your only plan, as has become clear after seven long years in office, is to reward Liberal friends and insiders and stick Ontario families with the bill.

You say you are bringing down ER wait times. Premier, you have lost touch with what's happening in communities around the province: seniors and families waiting up to 23 hours for care in emergencies in Premier McGuinty's Ontario. And now you've set your eyes on St. Marys hospital. St. Marys hospital has its ER in jeopardy. You're cutting out their rehab beds and making patients drive 50 kilometres for service, and you are going to cut five acute care beds.

Premier, why are you rewarding Liberal friends? Why did you blow a billion dollars at eHealth while you're cutting services at St. Marys?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The pattern that has emerged here is very clear. It's just an endless string of slogans and rhetoric which have no bearing to reality and the concerns of Ontario families whatsoever.

We will continue to put forward plans. We will continue to act on the basis of our plans. My friend says he is not in favour of our emergency room plan. He has no plan to offer of any kind.

Let's listen to what the chair of public affairs from the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians said about our plan. He said, "The commitment of the McGuinty government to addressing the issue of prolonged ER wait times has been nothing if not impressive...."

"They ... have dedicated considerable resources to defining and addressing the problem that was not of their making and are unwavering in their search for a solution. This is leadership and we can only hope that other provincial governments follow" the Ontario government's lead.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, sadly, Premier, there's no opportunity for another province to follow Ontario when we're dead last when it comes to economic growth and job creation in the province. That is the legacy of the McGuinty government, on top of the billions of dollars wasted at eHealth, wasted at OLG, wasted at the Niagara Parks Commission, Cancer Care Ontario, MPAC. The only endless string is the endless string of McGuinty government scandals that have wasted money and cut services to Ontario families who pay the bills.

Premier, you've already closed down Fort Erie's ER. You've closed down Port Colborne's ER. Now you have St. Marys hospital in your sights as well. But you are putting \$250 million into regional health bureaucracies called LHINs. Premier, won't you admit your bloated bureaucracy, the LHINs, is a tragic mistake?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: They don't have a plan, but it has been said that the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. They shut down 28 hospitals. We're building 18 new hospitals in the province of Ontario. We've hired 10,000 new nurses. We're the first province to ever measure wait times for emergency rooms. We're the only party with a plan to bring those down. We do know that they remain absolutely committed to cutting \$3 billion out of health care. What exactly is that going to transfer into when it comes to nurse losses, doctor losses, hospital losses and wait times going up? We need to take that into account because, again, they refuse to put forward a plan of their own.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: There's no doubt that when it comes to Premier McGuinty—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Start the clock. Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: There's no doubt that when it comes to the way that Premier McGuinty conducts himself in office past behaviour is every predictor. This was a man who said he wouldn't raise taxes, a man who says everything to try to get elected and then breaks those promises one by one once elected.

You had an eHealth scandal, and then you had another eHealth scandal. You had a lottery and gaming scandal, and then you had two more. The Niagara Parks Commission scandals were followed by scandal after scandal after scandal. Premier, the legacy of the McGuinty waste runs far too deep and Ontario families want to see a change.

Let me give you one more example, Premier, when it comes to these LHINs. They don't do a single minute of patient care, they don't spend one minute in surgery and they don't do a single MRI, but you're closing down, potentially, an ER and beds in St. Marys. Premier, we would close the doors to the LHINs and put every penny into front-line health care for Ontario families instead. Why won't you?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order. I'd just remind the honourable members that we are about 20 days from Christmas and there's somebody out there who's keeping a list.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm happy to contrast the plan and the progress that we continue to make on behalf of Ontarians with their absence of a plan and the signals they've made which threaten health care in Ontario. We're getting wait times down. One million more Ontarians have access to a family doctor. We are building 18 new hospitals in the province of Ontario. We have 2,900 more physicians practising in the province of Ontario. We've increased medical school spaces. We have 200 more family health teams treating millions more patients. We've hired over 10,000 new nurses.

All they have to offer is a promise to take \$3 billion out of the public health care system, and beyond that, now they're saying they don't believe in local input, they don't believe in local direction and they don't believe in local authority shaping the use of their precious tax dollars.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'll start with the member from Renfrew, who will withdraw the comment that he just made.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Simcoe North will withdraw the comment that he made.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday I met with the Bonin family in Sudbury. They've been slapped with a \$2,000 hydro bill for a summer residence that was supposed to be a retirement investment. They are convinced that this bill is not right and they've been struggling with this government's hydro bureaucracy for months trying to get it fixed. Does their problem have to come all the way to this Legislature before it gets resolved?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to hear the question from my honourable colleague. I think it would be very helpful if she were to produce the bill so we could take a good, long, hard look at it to better understand the nature of the challenge faced by this particular family.

1050

Again, I will remind Ontarians that this question comes from the leader of a party which has yet to put forward a plan when it comes to meeting the long-term energy needs of the people of Ontario. We put forward a long-term energy plan. It's all about ensuring that we have all the electricity that we need—furthermore, clean electricity that creates jobs—so that our families can enjoy good-quality lives and our businesses can expand and grow during the course of the next 20 years.

We have some very important themes that run throughout that plan. We believe in more jobs, we believe in creating a new and exciting industry, we believe in clean air and we believe in reliability of supply. Those are the important imperatives that inspire our plan.

Again, I put it to my colleague—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Bonin family is quite unique, but the problems facing families as they struggle with the Premier's hydro schemes are not unique at all: a smart meter scheme that doesn't help people save money or conserve energy; local utilities scrambling around to make the smart meter program work; and private power deals that drive up costs and keep families in the dark. How does the McGuinty government expect families like the Bonins to cope?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I encourage my honourable colleague to use our long-term energy plan as the basis for consideration as they develop theirs. The sooner they can put that into the mix, the better off the people of Ontario will be, but again, we remain absolutely committed to our plan.

Last week we announced the culmination of two weeks of announcements. I think there are over 2,000 new jobs: 900 jobs in Tillsonburg, 700 jobs in Windsor, 126 jobs in Essex county, 150 jobs in Waterloo, 300 jobs in Hamilton, 100 jobs in Atikokan, 16 high-skill jobs in Kingston—all related to our clean energy plan.

My honourable colleague knows that one of the things that families desire most is the assurance of a good-paying job. We are speaking to that directly through our clean energy plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Bonins' story is familiar to families across Ontario. Every month people are gathering around the kitchen table, looking at the pay-cheque, then looking at the bills, and wondering how they're going to make it all work, and when they look at their government for help they get no reply whatsoever. All they see are so-called smart meters, private power deals and an unfair sales tax slapped on household essentials. Is this really the best the Premier can do for struggling families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The honourable member opposite said that the most important thing we could do would be to reduce electricity bills by 8%. We've gone 2% further. There's now in place a clean energy benefit;

it takes effect on January 1. It's going to cut all our bills by 10% over the course of the next five years. You would think that she would stand in her place and say, "You know what? I came up short. Not only did I never put a plan before the people of Ontario, I only asked for 8%." We've gone 2% better than that.

More than that, there is an energy and property tax credit for Ontario seniors which is going to be very important for 740,000 seniors, who stand to benefit by up to \$1,025. So it's 10% off electricity bills, every electricity bill, effective January 1 for five years, and then, especially for seniors, an energy and property tax credit of up to \$1,025. That is real, it is substantive and it's important to our families.

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. With each passing day, the scandal enveloping the Niagara Parks Commission gets murkier and murkier. To date, this Premier has avoided answering any questions whatsoever on this matter. Rather than passing the buck again this morning, will he stand in his place and agree with New Democrats that the only way to clear the air is by calling in the Auditor General?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question. Our government is taking a responsible approach to address the concerns that have been raised. Earlier this year, in February, we took a hard look at the commission and we felt at that time that the commission needed new direction. This is why we chose to appoint a new chair and this is why we chose to appoint a vice-chair, two individuals who understand the need to chart a new course for the commission.

We chose to move ahead with internal and external audits. We made changes to the board. We made changes to senior management. We are committed to take all necessary action to ensure that tourism remains strong and vibrant in the Niagara region.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: As much as this government would like this scandal to go away, it deserves investigation by the Auditor General so that we can get to the bottom of what really happened here. Why is the government so stubbornly refusing a call for this kind of investigation?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question again.

This much is clear: There's a long-standing corporate culture and practice at the commission that needs to be changed. Recently, the former general manager of the commission, from 1995 to 1998, described the way it was functioning then as backroom deals, botched projects, distorted construction bids and a severe lack of policies and procedures. In 1995, the NDP was in government. In 1998, the PCs were in government. In 2001, the Leader of the Opposition was the tourism minister. Why didn't those parties do anything about the problem then?

On this side of the House, we have made significant changes to the commission, and we are committed to making more changes to bring greater accountability and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members from Nepean and Simcoe North.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Lavish spending, loosey-goosey financial controls, questionable links with contractors—if ever a situation cried out for the Auditor General, this is it.

Since the Premier refuses to call in the Auditor General, New Democrats are bringing forward a motion at the public accounts committee on Wednesday. Will the government members be voting to bring in the Auditor General, or will they continue to try to sweep under the carpet this horrible scandal at the Niagara Parks Commission?

Hon. Michael Chan: We have a plan. We are moving ahead with our plan. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members for Simcoe North, Oxford, Lanark, Simcoe—Grey—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): —and Lanark again. Members will please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: In February of this year, we assessed the situation. We needed to chart a new course. We needed a new chair, one that is experienced and knowledgeable. We moved ahead with a new chair. We moved ahead with a strong vice-chair. We needed to change the board; we changed the board. We needed to change the management; we changed the management. We moved ahead with internal and external audits.

On this side of the House, we are committed to finding solutions. On that side of the House, there's a lot of empty rhetoric, a lot of empty voices.

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question as well is to the Minister of Tourism. Earlier this year, Premier McGuinty asked public servants to make a sacrifice and agree to freeze their wages. So the question we have in the opposition is, why is Fay Booker of the Niagara Parks Commission allowed to double her pay while non-unionized public servants were forced to take a wage freeze?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question. That question will be debated tomorrow night at 6 o'clock.

It does give me the opportunity to talk about the commission. We have a plan to bring change to the commission. Let me remind them of what we are doing. Earlier this year, we took a hard look at the commission. We assessed the situation. We wanted to make changes. Let's look at the changes: a new chair; a new vice-chair; change to senior management; change to the approval of

expenses; change to governance; and last but not least, change to the board.

The PC Party remains without a plan, without a clue. Let's hope that the party opposite can recall some of that information.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That was disgraceful. First of all, if we're going to debate this question, we'll debate it here right now, not tomorrow night. The second thing is, if he wants to talk about change, we'll talk about change in October of next year.

1100

Premier McGuinty has asked public sector workers and Ontario families who pay them to make sacrifices in these tough times, but there is apparently a different set of rules for those who are friends and family of Dalton McGuinty and his Liberals. Fay Booker —

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable member about the use of names, titles, ridings or ministries.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Fay Booker says that she should be allowed to collect pay for meetings' pre-prep time because she cut the number of commission meetings, but she collected her \$250 per diem for more than just six commission meetings because she took home over \$20,000 for half of the year.

Minister, stand in your place and tell me, is she collecting twice her pay to do the same work, or is she being paid the same amount to do half the work?

Hon. Michael Chan: I invited the honourable member tomorrow, Tuesday at 6 o'clock, to come to the House and let's have a debate.

Let me draw attention to this. The Leader of the Opposition was questioned about complaints he received as tourism minister and he says, "I don't have a recollection."

The Conservatives don't have a plan—they don't. They don't have a clue. We have a plan. Earlier this year we took a hard look at the commission. We felt that it needed to chart a new course, so we brought in a new chair, a new vice-chair. We are seeing positive changes: change to the board, change to senior management, change to approval of expenses, change to governance.

That party remains without a plan, perhaps without a clue.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. The McGuinty government has repeatedly promised new light rail transit for tens of thousands of Toronto commuters who now spend hours each day commuting on overcrowded buses. But in the budget, the government pulled \$4 billion in funding for Transit City and now it appears willing to stand aside while the new mayor cancels the light rail lines, wastes hundreds of millions of dollars and further delays access to better public transit for years if not decades.

My question is this: Why is the McGuinty government abandoning its Transit City promise so willingly?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think we've been very clear that we are willing to work with the new mayor and council, but I really would expect that the member opposite would understand that there's just been an election in the city of Toronto, as there have been municipal elections across the province. A new council has been elected and a new mayor.

We've been clear that we think we've got a very good plan in place. If the city council and the mayor decide that they want to go in a different direction, it behooves us to have that conversation with them, but we have to at least let council meet. Council has not even met yet. So I would hope that the member opposite would give council and the mayor some time to talk about what they'd like to do going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question, part two, is again to the Premier. The McGuinty government doesn't know what position to take. Last week, the transportation minister said that any Transit City decision should be made by the full Toronto city council, but this weekend, the energy minister declared that the decision should be in the hands of the mayor and that, "We should not pass judgment on the mayor's decision-making."

With years of planning in limbo, tens of thousands of commuters waiting and hundreds of millions of dollars on the line, is this really the McGuinty government's approach to resolving the situation? Have one minister say one thing and have another contradict her?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're on the same page—the Premier, the Minister of Energy and I—as is our government. We believe in public transit. We are making the biggest investment in public transit in a generation. We have worked with the municipalities all over the GTHA and across the province to make sure that there's more public transit in place.

The party opposite voted every single time against those investments. The member opposite has spoken consistently against the air-rail link.

We know that people in the GTHA need more public transit. That's why we are making the investments that we're making. There has been an election in Toronto. There needs to be a discussion among the mayor and the council members about their priorities going forward. We are willing to work with them, but we are committed to building public transit in the GTHA.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Energy policy is also economic policy, and two of the key indicators of good economic policy are the creation of jobs and attraction of private sector investment.

The global recession highlighted the need to look beyond our traditional areas of expertise, particularly in the manufacturing sector. We have one of the most highly skilled workforces in the world here in Ontario, but as the global economy presents new challenges, Ontario needs to lead when it comes to creating new opportunities for our workers.

Minister, how is energy policy in this province supporting those workers and creating that new opportunity?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for raising what is a very important question.

He's absolutely right: Ontario does need to lead the way when it comes to opening up new opportunities for workers, particularly in the manufacturing sector, as our economy recovers.

We're doing just that by making Ontario a global clean energy powerhouse. Just last week, I had the pleasure to be in Windsor with the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade to announce that Windsor would be the location for Samsung and CS Wind's new tower manufacturing plant; towers, by the way, that are going to be made with 100% Ontario steel. That's good news for steelworkers across this province. This state-of-the-art facility is going to employ 300 Windsor workers directly and another 400 indirectly.

These new manufacturing jobs come as a direct result of the investment in Ontario by Samsung and its partners; investments that the party opposite does not support, did not support when they came forward and continues—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: Thank you, Minister. It's important to see a new, leading-edge economy taking root right here in Ontario.

Clean energy is our future, here in Ontario, across North America and, frankly, around the world. Those who are willing to recognize that fact and who have a plan to seize those opportunities for global leadership in this new economy are the ones who will prosper from it. Ignoring the economic opportunities produced by clean energy, shunning private sector investment and having no plan whatsoever when it comes to energy is absolutely no way to move Ontario forward.

Minister, for the sake of Ontario workers, can you commit to continuing to champion our province as a place that is open for business and open to new investment from around the world when it comes to clean energy?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Absolutely. This government will always stand up for Ontario as the place to invest in North America for clean energy investment.

In fact, the day following my visit to Windsor to announce those 700 jobs, I travelled to Tillsonburg, in the riding of Oxford, to announce the Siemens turbine blade manufacturing facility that's going to be located there. This facility is the first of its kind in Ontario. It will create 300 direct jobs and another 600 indirect jobs for families of Oxford county.

Again, these jobs in Tillsonburg are a direct result of the investment in Ontario by Samsung and its partners,

an investment, I remind members opposite, that the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the third party do not support.

I'm curious about how the member for Oxford will explain to his constituents why he and his leader want so badly to remove these jobs from his community. If he doesn't want to stand up for his constituents, we will. We're going to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You're debating with one another. New question.

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

Mr. Jim Wilson: To the Minister of Tourism: Last week, the member from Thornhill asked about a \$50,000 contract that the chair of the Niagara Parks Commission, Fay Booker, had handed to her friend from Burlington, Peter Van Kessel.

The minister's response in this House was, "That went through a competitive process." Well, it did not go through a competitive process, Minister, and while standing order 23(j) does not allow me to charge that you uttered "a deliberate falsehood," it doesn't stop me from saying that you did utter a falsehood—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You can't say indirectly what you would like to say directly, and I would just ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Withdrawn.

Would the minister then tell this House why he told this House that the contract went through a competitive process when clearly it did not go through a competitive process?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question. Again, that will be a debate tomorrow, Tuesday, at 6 o'clock, and we look forward to the honourable member coming to the debate.

1110

It does give me the opportunity to talk about the commission. There is a long-standing corporate culture that needs to be changed. There are long-standing practices at the commission that need to be changed. These go back to 1995, to 1998, to 2001—2001, when the current Leader of the Opposition was the tourism minister. The root of the problem is at the heart of today's Conservative Party. Yes, the seed of the problem was planted when the Leader of the Opposition was Minister of Tourism.

They don't have a plan; we have one.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: The minister says that Fay Booker, the chair that was chosen by the Liberal government, is taking the Niagara Parks Commission in a new direction. That direction is marked by her sole-sourcing a \$50,000 sweetheart deal to her friend, extending the same deal without competition, scrapping the competition for an external auditor when it was clear that her friends at her

old firm wouldn't win that competition on merit and trying to double her pay. And there's more to come.

Minister, you've already tied yourself and your Liberal caucus colleagues to Fay Booker. Do you not understand that expressing confidence in Ms. Booker will just embolden her to continue to break the rules?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question again. That will be debated tomorrow, Tuesday, at 6 o'clock.

Concerns have been raised, recently and in the past. How far does it go back? It goes back to 1995, 1998, 2001—backroom deals, botched projects, distorted construction bids and a severe lack of policies and procedures. What we see is a systemic, historical—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

Hon. Michael Chan: It goes back. It went back to the Mike Harris government. It went back to when the current opposition leader was the Minister of Tourism.

They didn't have a plan, they don't have a plan and they don't have a clue. We have a plan that looked for the new chair and we have a plan that brought the new vice-chair.

NORTHERN ONTARIO ACCESS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have a question to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, you know that there is increasingly more frustration every day in northern Ontario when it comes to the MNR shutting down access to pieces of northern Ontario where people have been travelling and going for years.

I have a particular example, and we're soliciting your help to see if at least you can fix one of these. There is what they call Fushimi Lake. Fushimi Lake is just outside of Hearst. For three generations, local people in Hearst have been accessing that lake through Brûlé Creek. All of a sudden last year, MNR decided that they're going to post a sign, and nobody's allowed to have any motorized access to Fushimi Lake from that particular creek.

Are you prepared to do something to fix that or are we going to have to continue seeing more and more of northern Ontario shut down to northerners?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm happy to talk about access to our parks. Certainly, I've spoken with many people and organizations who represent people who love our parks and want to fish and hunt in those. We work very closely with our partners to make sure that we have arrangements in those parks that work for the local communities. We do a lot of consultations. We make sure that, particularly for those remote parks in the north, we are only closing down vehicular access to those parks. That's the only thing we do. The rest of the time you can come in and canoe and portage; you can fly into those parks.

The access is something we want to make sure continues because these are our greatest assets in Ontario. We feel very strongly that these are resources that everybody wants to take part in, and we continue to work with

local communities. I'm happy to have those discussions with any local community.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, the local mayor and council, along with the people affected, have been meeting with MNR on numbers of occasions; I have as well. We brought this issue to you, but it's yet one more example about how people in northern Ontario who have been accessing an area for either fishing, snowmobiling or picking blueberries aren't able to access particular parts of northern Ontario because you're posting signs saying, "Don't enter here. You can't get in. Off limits to you."

For three generations people have been going on to Fushimi Lake. They know well where that place is. What we're asking you to do is, will you do what you have the right to do as minister and allow access on to Fushimi Lake from the Brûlé Creek, or are you going to continue shutting down more of northern Ontario?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: As I stated earlier, I understand that there are some Ontarians who are concerned about their ability to access crown land. I want to assure Ontario residents that they continue to enjoy unrestricted access to the vast majority of crown land for recreational purposes. As I said earlier, they can still use these lands to hike, to canoe, to portage or to fly in to access those areas. Fishing and hunting are still permitted.

Restricted access is primarily aimed, as I said earlier, at motorized vehicles. It's also used to protect sensitive fish and wildlife populations from overexploitation—we have sensitive trout lakes that we want to protect—and for public safety reasons, if there's a culvert breakdown or a washout. We're working towards balancing the public need to access our recreational opportunities with the need to protect our wildlife and enhance remote area experiences.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Ontario, like many jurisdictions around the world, is only now beginning to feel the effects of recovery following one of the most devastating financial recessions. It wasn't long ago that thousands of Ontarians, even in my riding of Oak Ridges—Markham, lost their jobs due to cash-strapped businesses needing to cut costs or even having to close their doors.

Last week, Statistics Canada reported that upwards of 31,000 net new jobs were created in our province last month alone. What a stark contrast from where we were just 12 months ago. This is definitely encouraging news for the people of this province. However, despite this good news, many of my constituents are understandably still worried about their future and the future of their loved ones.

We know that we aren't out of this recession just yet, so I ask the minister to tell us what our government is doing to strengthen our economy and to keep Ontarians working.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I am delighted to take this question from the MPP from Oak Ridges—Markham because it is good to see that the Ontario economy is starting to turn around. We got some very good news from StatsCan just recently that Ontario has actually regained 87% of the jobs that we had lost due to the recession. This is very important for us to see.

It's also important for us to be mindful of those that are not yet back on their feet. We still have more work to do, and families still need to feel that strength where we can lend a hand. That's why there are initiatives like the 10% reduction on their hydro bills to help families cope with their bills even as our economy is improving.

It's important that we see highlights, as we saw this weekend—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member knows better than to bring a prop.

Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to thank the minister for that response. It is definitely encouraging to know that 87% of the jobs that were lost during the recession have been recovered in our province and that 31,000 more Ontarians were back on the job last month. Compared to the American numbers, where only 11% of the jobs that were lost during the recession have been recovered, it is clear that Ontario is back on track.

Statistics Canada reports that in the 12 months ending November 2010, Ontario employment in all sectors increased by 139,800 jobs. The goods-producing sectors gained 41,000 jobs, and the service-producing sectors 98,800. My constituents have been calling my office to ask me specifics about these new jobs that have been created. I ask the minister to provide this House with specific examples of some new jobs recently created in the province.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I am delighted that some of our initiatives are actually helping Ontario families, that we're able to extend the off-peak pricing for electricity by two more hours, helping families at a very local level. In the meantime, our larger provincial strategy is to assist industries to actually exist, like our new clean energy sector. We've already heard today in the House—and it bears repeating—that all of these hundreds of jobs being announced just in the last week alone tie directly to our new green energy plan to build clusters, where we use the expertise that we've gained over the years in the manufacturing sector and apply it to new sectors—and then other sectors like financial services. Special congratulations to a company like Barclays that literally doubled in size; that announcement was just last week.

We see these pockets of growth. We know there's more work to do. We plan to be there for Ontario families just as we have been in this last year.

1120

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: On April 22, I tabled a resolution in the House that calls on the government to implement online organ and tissue

donor registration. This is not groundbreaking technology; in fact, it's in place in almost every state in the United States and in eight provinces.

Given Ontario's dismal record of donor registrations compared to other jurisdictions, this should be a priority for the Ministry of Health. Can the minister tell us why Ontarians still, after these many months, don't have the ability to register their intentions online?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the question from the honourable member opposite, who has been advocating hard to increase organ donation in this province. We are making good success. We know we could do better. In fact, the Ministry of Government Services is working right now to bring online donation to be a reality in this province. We of course have to ensure that all privacy issues are dealt with appropriately.

We've done a good job increasing donor registration. We could do better if we had an online donation possibility in this province, and we're on our way to getting there.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: It's been literally months since the minister appointed a working group on this. Some 1,600 Ontarians are on a wait-list. More than 100 people in Ontario die every year while on that wait-list. The Auditor General has made Ontario's organ and tissue transplant program a target of his audit, and I'm sure the minister will probably be informed by his report.

Will the minister today undertake that this will in fact be identified as a priority for her ministry, and will she tell us today what her target date is for implementation of an online registry for Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's important to acknowledge the work that has been done when it comes to increasing the number of transplants in this province. In fact, we've increased by 50% the number of transplants since 2003.

As I said in the first question, we can do better when it comes to registration. We are hopeful that this will be up and running by next year. Some time next year, people will be able to go online and register their willingness to be a donor, should that occasion arise.

However, people should not wait for this enhancement. They can go online today, access the form, send that in and their wish to be a donor will be registered.

So now in our hospitals, we have 24-7 lookup of registered donors, and that increases greatly the likelihood—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question's to the Premier. Last Wednesday, the Sault Area Hospital released its so-called hospital improvement plan. Can the Premier explain how cutting 22 front-line nurses actually improves care for the people of Sault Ste. Marie?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. You know, all of our hospitals are working very, very hard to make the changes that are necessary in order to have the best possible health care system. We are really focusing on enhancing the capacity of our health care system outside our hospitals, investing in community care to make sure people get the care they need as close to home as possible.

Status quo is not an option in the health care system today. We have to continually be improving our health care system, making sure we're getting the very best value for our health care dollars and, at the same time, improving the quality of health care received in our communities and in our hospitals.

These are not easy decisions that hospitals are making, but I have every confidence the hospital improvement plan at the Sault Area Hospital is the way to go.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Sault Area Hospital is facing the second-worst deficit of all hospitals across the province. The hospital has been operating at 107% capacity, and alternate-level-of-care patients account for 35% of all inpatients. On top of firing nurses, the hospital is cutting out patient safety improvement programs in maternal care.

Again, how can the Premier and his minister think that cutting care and safety programs will improve hospital services for the people of Sault Ste. Marie?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The leader of the third party actually did touch on what is so important about this hospital improvement plan. This plan is predicated on reducing the ALC numbers to 15%, so they are doing exactly what they should be doing: ensuring that there is capacity outside the hospital for people who do not need to be in hospital, do not want to be in hospital and are not getting an optimal level of care in the hospital. They would be better served elsewhere.

As the Sault Area Hospital works to reduce their ALC rates, that means that they will be able to, in fact, reduce the service in their hospital, but that is contingent on having enhanced services in the community.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I have a question for the Minister of Revenue. The riding of Algoma-Manitoulin has 35 municipalities, but amongst its 86,000 square kilometres we have a great number of unincorporated areas. The provincial land tax bills have come out very late this year, and in coming out very late, some of my constituents have not even had the opportunity to pay them by the due date. What are the Minister of Revenue and the ministry prepared to do to help these constituents?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I want to take the opportunity to thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for that question and also for the hard work that he does for all his constituents.

It came to our attention that many provincial land tax bills were sent out later than normal due to a system change. The due date on these bills left very little time for taxpayers to pay on time. We recognize that this was an error on our part at the ministry and I'd like to apologize to all those who were affected by this inconvenience. The deadline for northerners to make payments for their final 2010 provincial land tax bill has been extended. The due date for instalment payments originally due on December 3, 2010, is extended to January 31, 2011. Payments originally due on December 17, 2010, are extended to February 28—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I appreciate the minister's answer.

Some of these bills were due Friday—wow—and people in the riding of Algoma-Manitoulin and across the north have been asking me what is happening with these bills. There is a great deal of miscommunication out there these days. I'm wondering what the ministry is doing to provide communication to these folks.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: First, let me just again mention the instalment dates and the extension to those. December 3, 2010, is extended to January 31, 2011. December 17, 2010, is extended to February 28, 2011. The provincial land tax payment may be made at most financial institutions in Ontario free of charge.

When we talk about communication, I want to say that we apologize for the inconvenience. We have sent out a press release to media across the province, including northern media, to provide clarity about this issue and we will be following up with the media today with a personal phone call. We're also posting all the information on our website at ontario.ca/revenue and we are here to help if there are any questions.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, as you know, in August the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions presented its final report, which included 23 recommendations to improve mental health and addiction services across Ontario. Recommendation 17 in the report calls on the government to divert more individuals with a mental illness or addiction out of the justice system and into appropriate services and supports. The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health has also identified a need for specialized care for women involved in the justice system, yet few services are available. Minister, will you move forward on recommendation 17?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me take this opportunity to thank the members of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. They did an outstanding job, under the very capable leadership of the member from Oakville. I think all of us in this Legislature can take a lesson from the select committee on how they

worked in a non-partisan way to really understand an issue and provide recommendations to the government.

I was very pleased, the day after the report was released, that I was able to move on one of the recommendations. I can assure the member opposite that we take the recommendations very seriously and are working to release a 10-year mental health and addictions strategy.

1130

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: I was appalled when I saw the reports of the Ashley Smith tragedy. It's deplorable that so many women in the prison system don't get the mental health treatment they so desperately need.

This could be addressed by creating a secure treatment unit for females at the Brockville Mental Health Centre. The model now in place for men has seen a remarkable 38% reduction in recidivism amongst the highest-risk group. We have the facility, we have the staff, we have the program, and we have a willing host community. That's why I'm working with municipality and federal partners and the Royal Ottawa Hospital.

Minister, my question is, when will this government join us at the table to build this treatment unit before another Ashley Smith has to suffer?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I can report to the House that the government has invested some \$50 million since 2004 in service enhancements to keep people with mental illness out of the criminal justice system; I know the committee was very concerned about that. It has expanded the continuum of services such as crisis teams, safe beds, mental health court workers, case managers and supportive housing to prevent people with a mental illness from being charged with criminal offences and to support diversion to other services.

The treatment programs exist within our correctional systems to support prisoners with mental health and addictions. We've established on-site fitness assessment clinics for court-ordered mental health assessments at five of our institutions. We continue to work on this, and we really like the recommendations that have been made by the select committee. I think it's been an outstanding exercise—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. Today is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in Canada. Violence against women remains a serious problem, from acts of hatred, such as the Montreal massacre, to acts of coercion, such as sexual harassment and domestic abuse.

New Democrats put forward a motion, actually years ago, to form an all-women, all-party committee to form recommendations regarding domestic violence. Why

won't the government overcome their partisanship to focus on this?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to stand in the House and talk about women's issues on this day, a critically important day. December 6, 1989, was a day that changed our country. As a young university student, I recall watching the television and gaining an understanding that the act that had been committed, which was being described as a violent act, was in fact a violent misogynistic act; it was an act of violence against women. It took some time for our country to acknowledge that issue, and since that day in 1989, we've worked very hard as a nation and as a province to stand, recognize and take action.

As someone who was privileged to work with the Premier and the minister responsible for women's issues at the time to develop our province's domestic violence action plan and now to work on our sexual violence action plan, I'm very proud of the steps that we have taken in our government to name issues, solve problems and find ways to better support women in the violence that they face in their—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The actual fact is that violence is up across the board, if you speak to people working in the field. Quite frankly, I didn't hear anything approximating an answer to a very simple question. We New Democrats have had on the books for a while now a simple request. It's a simple, obvious request, and people in Ontario, women in Ontario, are absolutely horrified that this government has not acted on it.

The committee on mental health and addictions, also an all-party committee, worked well, and we need the same for action to end violence against women. Are women simply not worthy of the McGuinty government's attention?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I would have hoped that this was a non-partisan issue. We work on this side of the House every day with stakeholders right across the province to find ways to invest more to protect women. That's why we've invested more than \$208 million each and every year to protect women from violence and support victims of abuse. In fact, our actions have demonstrated the support that we have for women right across the province. We want women to feel safe in their homes, in their communities, in their workplaces. That's our government's goal. That's a non-partisan goal. That's a step that we take with the groups right across the province. But I do remember that the NDP has voted against many of those initiatives. They haven't stood side by side with us as we've fought and fought for a better world for women in Ontario.

We will do that work, we have done that work and we'll continue to do that work, and I hope we will see the NDP—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, as you know, I represent a downtown urban riding where a number of my constituents live on low or fixed incomes and in affordable housing. Minister, we've seen a lot of partisan posturing on energy prices recently from the opposition, but a discussion about how we can achieve a clean, modern and reliable electricity system, and talking about how we plan to accomplish that, is a valuable debate for all Ontarians.

Minister, I'm concerned about those folks who live on low incomes and are being shamelessly targeted with cheap political scare tactics. The proposed Ontario clean energy benefit, a 10% reduction on totals for the residential bills, is undeniably a big step in keeping electricity affordable for families everywhere.

Could the minister explain what impact this has on those who are living in social housing?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for the question. It's a very important question. I want to thank not only this member but the other members from Ottawa who sit on this side of the House who have been so very proactive on the social housing issue.

The reality is that of all the tenants living in social housing across Ontario, 32% pay their own energy bills. That means roughly \$5 million will be going directly into the pockets of social housing tenants. But don't take it from me; let's hear what others have to say. Jo-Anne Poirier, for example, the CEO for Ottawa Community Housing: "A 10% reduction in our hydro costs would save our organization approximately \$750,000 per year.... This would enhance the quality of life for our tenants and further protect our assets."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Time for question period has ended.

I just want to remind the members that tonight is the Lights Across Canada celebration from 6:00 to 6:20. Our pages will be providing a musical interlude. The Mega-City Chorus will be here as well tonight and the official lighting will take place just past 7 o'clock this evening. Everyone is welcome to attend down in the main lobby.

DEFERRED VOTES

TAXATION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on private members' notice of motion number 64 in the name of Mr. Clark.

Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1138 to 1143.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On Thursday, December 2, Mr. Clark moved private member's notice of motion number 64. Remember, this is private members' business. All those in favour will rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Chudleigh, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Savoline, Joyce
Clark, Steve	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Christine	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Yakabuski, John
Hillier, Randy	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed will rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Dombrowsky, Leona	Mitchell, Carol
Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Moridi, Reza
Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Fonseca, Peter	Naqvi, Yasir
Bartolucci, Rick	Gélinas, France	Phillips, Gerry
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Prué, Michael
Best, Margarett	Hampton, Howard	Pupatello, Sandra
Bisson, Gilles	Hoskins, Eric	Ruprecht, Tony
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Sandals, Liz
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Smith, Monique
Brown, Michael A.	Kwinter, Monte	Takhar, Harinder S.
Brownell, Jim	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Van Bommel, Maria
Chan, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Wilkinson, John
Chiarelli, Bob	Levac, Dave	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Zimmer, David
Dickson, Joe	Meilleur, Madeleine	
DiNovo, Cheri	Milloy, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 17; the nays are 49.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In response to a question I asked the energy minister on November 2, he said: "For the seventh time, no, we're not raising any fees when it comes to our efforts to continue to invest in conservation." Now that he has voted against the member for Leeds-Grenville's motion to scrap—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That sounds more like a member's statement than a point of order. I would encourage it to be a member's statement.

USE OF LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just call the members to order, please. I have a ruling to deal with.

On Wednesday, October 6, the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills, Mr. Sterling, rose on what he claimed was a point of order concerning a reception that was held the previous evening in the legislative dining room. The member complained that the event did not comply with the established rules for use of public spaces in the Legislative Building. The government House leader, Ms. Smith, also spoke to the matter.

As I said when this matter was raised, a matter of parliamentary procedure was not at issue and therefore, the House was not the proper venue for the issue to be raised. It is common and expected practice for matters relating to the internal administration of the assembly to be raised privately and directly with the Speaker. How-

ever, I did commit to review and report back on this matter, and I now welcome a chance to do so because I think there is some value in confirming our policies and practices, there having been some uncertainty in the past respecting appropriate uses of the parliamentary precinct.

Events held in the public spaces of the Legislative Building, most commonly one of the committee rooms or the legislative dining room, are subject to policies that have been established for use of those facilities. One of the key aspects of this policy requires that events held by or on behalf of an outside organization must include invitations to all MPPs.

The member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills raised two specific issues. The first had to do with what I have just mentioned, being the inclusiveness of the event. The member claimed that he was not certain that all MPPs had been invited to the event, or if they had, that it was impractical for some members to attend because the invitations were issued at the last minute.

I can confirm that this event was properly booked, according to the existing policy, and that the requirement to include all parties was both conveyed by assembly officials to and acknowledged by the organizer. Since it is the organizer's responsibility to issue those invitations, I'm not in a position to address how they were issued or whether the gap between confirming the event and notifying all members of it was both reasonable and sufficient. However, in principle, I do consider it extremely important that as much notice as possible be given to members of all parties when events of this type are being held. Not only are members entitled to such basic consideration, but the overall success of such events is surely more likely to be achieved with good attendance by many members from all parties. This is only possible when members have the time they need to make the required arrangements on their calendars.

The member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills's second issue was with an alleged partisan tone of the remarks made by some who spoke at the event. As I'm sure he can appreciate, there is a significant difference between the Speaker's jurisdiction, under the existing policy, to insist upon invitations for all members to attend these events, on one hand, and the Speaker's ability to vet or regulate remarks made at the same events on the other. However, one might hope and expect that an event with the diplomatic stature of the one that is of issue here would be non-partisan in tone.

Suffice it to say that the very attendance of members from all parties should, in itself, work toward ensuring the fair dissemination of various viewpoints at such events, and that is why it is important that all members are invited and all parties can participate.

Finally, the raising of this matter has accelerated the consideration that was already being given to ways of enhancing the dissemination of information around the Legislative Assembly about various activities that go on here each day, whether it be a committee meeting, construction or work of some other type, temporary entrance closures or events of the type raised by the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills.

I'm considering ways to get this information out more proactively. One method I'm looking at is mounting video displays in various parts of the building, including the members' lobbies, where this information can be prominently displayed and updated as required. I would appreciate your thoughts and any other members' thoughts on this idea and others that would serve to better keep members informed about the numerous activities that take place here.

I thank the member for Carleton—Mississippi Mills for raising the matter and the government House leader for her contribution.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1151 to 1300.

ANNUAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table the 2010 annual report of the Auditor General of Ontario.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BARRHAVEN LEGION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is an honour for me to be able to bring to this Legislature a very important incident that occurred in my riding during remembrance week.

The Barrhaven Legion's members include some of Canada's greatest war heroes. On Saturday, November 6, 2010, the quick action of civilian bystanders at the Legion gave new meaning to the term "local heroes." That evening was our Barrhaven Legion's remembrance dinner. One of the Legion's comrades, a very good friend of mine, went into cardiac arrest.

Bystanders performed CPR and used the on-site defibrillator to shock him twice as Ottawa paramedics, police officers and firefighters rushed to the scene. Today, my friend, and our comrade, is alive and well due to the heroism and quick thinking of many of the Barrhaven Legion members, and in particular, two very special women I want to tell the Ontario Legislature about: Stacy Lamb and Lynn Hughes.

I was present that evening. It was highly traumatic for many of us to see a friend fallen. But these two women, Stacy Lamb and Lynn Hughes, went above and beyond. They kept their cool, knew their stuff and saved a life. Without their immediate action and training in CPR, this night may have ended in tragedy. I'd like to take this opportunity not only to commend Ms. Lamb and Ms. Hughes on their heroic actions but to thank them, because without them, one of our comrades might not be alive and well.

I'd also like to speak on the importance of on-site automatic external defibrillators in public buildings. The Barrhaven Legion's executive is an active proponent of

on-site defibrillators, and their decision to purchase two AED machines for their Legion has proven itself in true life or death situations, as accessibility of these life-saving machines and the actions of the members saved our comrade's life that evening.

Again, to Stacy and Lynn, thank you.

PIERRE AUBRY

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge a well-known attorney from Alexandria, Maître Pierre Aubry.

Maître Aubry was recognized last month by the La Fondation de l'Hôpital Glengarry Memorial Hospital Foundation for his outstanding commitment to the community of Glengarry and surrounding area.

Maître Aubry served as a director and chairman of the board of directors of the Glengarry Memorial Hospital Foundation for the past six years. During his tenure as chairman of the foundation, Maître Aubry helped raise over \$1.5 million for the hospital in support of a new emergency room, a new day surgery and ambulatory care unit, and a new ultrasound machine for the radiology department, just to name a few.

Maître Aubry gave generously of his time, his energy and his know-how, and has been an inspiration for all of us.

On behalf of the members of this Legislature, I would like to wish Maître Aubry the very best in all his future endeavours.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr. Jim Wilson: My office has received hundreds of postcard petitions from the residents of Green Briar and Briar Hill in New Tecumseth who are fed up with the McGuinty government's refusal to install traffic signals at the entrance to Green Briar on Highway 89. Let me tell you what my constituents are saying about this.

Chris from Alliston wrote: "The traffic signals are long overdue. As Green Briar is basically a retirement community, cars are coming and going all day long. Now we have two hockey rinks, plus the hotel, plus the golf course, plus soccer fields, plus the ongoing traffic to Walmart and all of the traffic from Honda. Please install them soon before a major accident occurs."

Mary from Alliston wrote: "Hopefully someone won't have to be killed before the light is put in. The flashing lights are useless."

Earl from Alliston wrote: "The traffic lights are essential! We moved to Green Briar in late November of 2007 in the midst of a major snowstorm. It did not take us long to realize how necessary traffic lights were for turning on Highway 89."

Brian from Alliston wrote: "It is extremely dangerous. The quick fix of flashing lights to slow down has done nothing. Residents in the area are aging and reflexes are not as quick" as they were. "Honda traffic at times is relentless. Someone is going to be killed."

It was wrong for the McGuinty government to cancel this project in 2003, after it was approved by the PC government. This is a very serious safety issue, and today I'm urging Premier McGuinty to act now before somebody gets hurt.

COMMUNITY RADIO

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: This past November 14 saw Carleton University's CKCU-FM celebrate 35 years of community radio for the students and citizens of Ottawa.

While many universities and colleges have radio stations, Carleton's CKCU was the first in Canada to hit the airwaves that November day in 1975, when Joni Mitchell's You Turn Me On, I'm a Radio was broadcast on 93.1 FM.

Since then, CKCU has been a pioneer in community broadcasting, with a mandate to provide an alternative to mainstream commercial radio and serve the many communities who may not be reflected in that media.

Fulfilling that mandate has been both interesting and challenging. As the Carleton alumni magazine recently put it: "With gutsy spirit and a predilection for pranks, CKCU's volunteer broadcasters have relied upon creative steam and gumption to remain on the air despite often-empty pockets."

As a registered charity, donations from students and listeners at large are integral to their service, and I encourage those who find themselves engaged by CKCU's distinct and important programming to consider assisting this very vibrant voice in our community.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer congratulations to Matthew Crosier, the station manager; and to the current and former volunteer journalists, DJs, announcers, commentators and community engagers. But also, I'll give props to the entire Carleton University community. You can be proud of the voice, ideas and current content you project to our city through your very own CKCU 93.1 FM.

INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Sunday, December 5, as International Volunteer Day.

Volunteering is the most fundamental act of citizenship in our province. As more and more people become involved in volunteering, our communities continue to grow and prosper.

By caring and contributing to change, volunteers are changing lives while increasing their own life skills. Every day, thousands of volunteers donate their time and energy without expectation of monetary reward. Thousands of Ontarians benefit from the selfless acts of volunteers.

In April, I introduced my private member's bill, the Criminal Record Checks for Volunteers Act. Most volunteer organizations, particularly those dealing with children, require their volunteers to submit a criminal

record check. In many cases, volunteers have to pay out of their own pocket for a criminal record check, or the organization has to fundraise to underwrite the cost of a criminal record check.

The goal of my bill would be to create a system whereby volunteers pay for their criminal record check once per year, yet can access this record to distribute to multiple volunteer organizations at no additional cost to the volunteer. This cost-saving initiative would encourage more volunteers to donate their time to multiple causes.

Volunteerism is an important sector, and without them in our schools, hospitals and community groups, our communities would suffer. As we recognize the important work of volunteers, we must remember that volunteers don't get paid not because they're worthless but because they are priceless.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Last night, I watched the television news and I saw President Santos of Colombia talking about the unprecedented national disaster that his country is facing. I saw clips of people digging frantically in the mud to try and rescue those who have been buried in mudslides.

A few days ago, Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel spoke about what he called the unprecedented forest fires in Israel. If you saw the clips, you saw the burnt-out hulk of the bus where dozens of Israeli prison guards were killed in that fire.

A few months ago, President Gilani of Pakistan talked about the unprecedented flooding and rain that left 20 million people homeless.

All unprecedented, but none unpredicted. Even 10 years ago, Israel was told about the potential for huge forest fires. A year ago, Colombia was told by the NDP about the potential for devastating flooding. The potential for flooding in Pakistan has been known for a long time.

Climate change is at the centre of all of those incidents. The countries and jurisdictions that have not acted to take it on—and Ontario's Liberal government is one of them—have failed ethically and have failed morally, and that inaction has to come to an end.

1310

RIDING OF MISSISSAUGA-STREETSVILLE

Mr. Bob Delaney: As the first grey winds of early winter bring swirling snow and Christmas shoppers to the streets, I'd like to pause and wish our many friends and neighbours in Streetsville and Meadowvale, Churchill Meadows and Lisgar a merry Christmas.

Western Mississauga is rich in Christmas tradition. Last weekend, I and my iconic cat, Obi-Wan, attended the annual Streetsville tree lighting ceremony. Our community lined Queen Street in Streetsville to catch a

glimpse of Santa and to see the many floats during the annual Santa Claus parade in Streetsville.

While the children of western Mississauga plead to their parents they have been more nice than naughty, I'd like to encourage all residents to consider kids less fortunate. The Salvation Army and Peel Regional Police's Toys for Tots program lets thousands of children across Mississauga experience the joy of unwrapping a new toy on Christmas morning.

Eden Community Food Bank in Meadowvale serves needy families in western Mississauga. They need monetary donations. You can donate online, by cash or by cheque.

Each year, I visit our seniors and attend many events celebrating the Christmas season and holidays of many different religions and communities. Merry Christmas to one and all throughout Meadowvale, Lisgar and Streetsville and a happy, healthy and fulfilling 2011.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Helena Jaczek: In September 2009, Ontario faced the first pandemic in over 40 years. During that time, we were not only preparing for the annual flu season but also anticipating the spread of H1N1. After several deaths were reported, many of my constituents in Oak Ridges-Markham called my office anxious to find out when and where they could receive the H1N1 immunization.

This year, it seems that complacency set in, perhaps because there is no threat of a pandemic. However, it is still important for Ontarians to get a flu shot. Taking the time to be immunized is very worthwhile. Although seniors and people with weak immune systems or chronic conditions are most at risk, even healthy kids and adults can become seriously ill or die from the flu. The flu shot is safe and, typically, 70% to 90% effective in preventing illness.

York region community and health services do an excellent job organizing flu shot clinics throughout York region. My constituents are able to attend these clinics at various community centres throughout Oak Ridges-Markham to receive their immunization. This year, the flu shot will not only protect Ontarians from several types of influenza but it will also provide protection against H1N1.

I encourage all Ontarians to take the time to get immunized. For residents of York region, check my website, helenajaczek.on.mpp.ca, for a flu clinic near you.

Protect yourself, your family and your community.

JOB CREATION

Mr. David Zimmer: The McGuinty government's leadership during tough economic times has led to 87% of jobs lost during the recession returning to Ontario. In an article from The Toronto Star of December 3: "Ontario was the only province with notable gains in

employment the agency said, up 31,000 jobs in November and pushing the unemployment rate down to 8.2 per cent."

The article goes on to say: "That brings jobless numbers for the province, which continues to build back from the heaviest job losses reported during the recession, to the lowest level reported since January 2009."

While the opposition and their leaders continue to wander around aimlessly through their plan-free zone, our government is delivering results for real Ontario families. In Windsor, CS Wind will create 700 new jobs with their wind turbine plant; 150 jobs will be created in Waterloo with ATS automation system manufacturing solar panels; 100 jobs in Thunder Bay when they convert their coal to clean fuel. These are just a few of the examples of jobs created in Ontario under the McGuinty leadership.

Our government is leading the nation in job creation. Ontario families and businesses have worked hard to cope with the recession, and our government has been there to help them.

Despite the good news, we continue to work hard daily to create jobs and stimulate the economy.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on the literacy and numeracy secretariat from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: The committee is responding to section 3.07 of the 2009 auditor's report; as you are aware, the auditor released his 2010 report today.

The committee meets and talks with regard to some of the sections of the report each year. The committee decided to look at the Ministry of Education's literacy and numeracy secretariat, which was dealt with in last year's report.

This was a relatively positive report about the literacy and numeracy secretariat, one of the reasons being that with the EQAO, the Education Quality and Accountability Office, we in the public accounts committee were able to actually know whether the commission was doing its job or not. In other words, there was a measure of accountability with regard to how our education system is doing. I want to say, in a general way, that that's where the committee would like all departments of the government to go: Measure the performance of a program, and then the committee and the auditor will know whether or not they're doing a good job.

I must say that, in general, the secretariat was doing a good job. There were some improvements they could

make, and those were noted in the report; there are six recommendations in the report.

With that, I would like to adjourn the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Sterling has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BAHRAM & HAMID INC. ACT, 2010

Mr. Zimmer moved first reading of the following bill: Bill Pr42, An Act to revive Bahram & Hamid Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

ORGANIC WASTE DIVERSION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE RÉACHEMINEMENT DES DÉCHETS ORGANIQUES

Mr. Sterling moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 146, An Act to ban organic waste from landfill sites / Projet de loi 146, Loi visant à interdire l'enfouissement des déchets organiques.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: This bill attempts to deal with the poor waste diversion record, at 22%, that we have in the province of Ontario; it was mentioned today in the auditor's report. This bill bans organic waste from landfills three years from proclamation of the bill. This would not only include municipal waste; it would also include waste from the industrial and commercial sectors.

If we were successful in banning all organic waste from landfills, we could increase our diversion rate from the present 22% to over 50%. We have to take some action, and this is one small part of that action to deal with solid waste problems in the province of Ontario.

JOURNÉE DE COMMÉMORATION ET D'ACTION CONTRE LA VIOLENCE FAITE AUX FEMMES

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Laurel C. Brotin: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to

each party to speak on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

L'hon. Laurel C. Brotin: Nous rendons hommage aujourd'hui aux 14 étudiantes en génie dont la vie a été tragiquement écourtée à l'École Polytechnique de Montréal.

Today, on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, we honour the 14 female engineering students whose lives were tragically cut short at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal. We must never forget that the horrible events of December 6, 1989, were caused by gender discrimination. The acts of that day 21 years ago are a stark reminder of one terrible fact: Women are at risk of violence because they are women.

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I was about the same age as these women when they died. This tragedy changed us as a generation, as women and as a society. This tragedy pointed then, and still does, to the inequality that is at the root of violence against women. Whether it is the sexual exploitation of women through human trafficking or the high number of missing and murdered aboriginal women across Canada, we see that inequality in all of its forms reinforces violence against women.

La rose du macaron que nous portons aujourd'hui symbolise l'engagement que nous prenons de ne jamais fermer les yeux sur la violence faite aux femmes. C'est un symbole de notre engagement à l'élimination du fossé qui sépare hommes et femmes.

The rose button we wear today signifies a commitment to never condone or remain silent about violence against women. It is a symbol that we will continue to strive to eliminate the gap in equality between men and women.

We can make a difference as individuals. It starts with each of us asking ourselves, "What can I do?" Equality grows with each of our efforts. Let's teach our boys and girls to value each other as equals and to demonstrate respect. As adults, we can lead by example.

As a woman who felt the tragedy at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal so personally, I want to ensure that this day is always remembered and always serves to mobilize us. As the cabinet minister responsible for women's issues, I want to ensure that women live without fear of violence at home, at work and in their communities. As leaders, we can ensure that all girls have equal access to all benefits of society to grow up, go to school and reach their potential with confidence and without gender-based violence. Each of us has a role to play.

Le 25 novembre a marqué la Journée internationale pour l'élimination de la violence à l'égard des femmes. Nous avons tous porté un ruban blanc ce jour-là pour souligner le rôle que peuvent jouer les hommes pour mettre fin à la violence contre les femmes. Le 25 novembre a aussi marqué le début des 16 jours d'activisme contre la violence faite aux femmes, une campagne d'une portée internationale qui dure jusqu'au 10 décembre.

November 25 was the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. We wore a white ribbon to recognize the role men can play in ending violence against women. The day began the internationally sanctioned 16 days of activism against gender-based violence, which continues through to December 10.

Today, on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, I ask that all members join me in wearing a red rose button. Wearing this rose, we remember women whose lives have been cut short by violence, including those who died in Montreal on December 6, 1989.

Let us take a moment to remember and acknowledge 14 lives lived and tragically lost: Geneviève Bergeron, age 21; Hélène Colgan, age 23; Nathalie Croteau, age 23; Barbara Daigneault, age 22; Anne-Marie Edward, age 21; Maud Haviernick, age 29; Barbara Klucznik Widajewicz, age 31; Maryse Laganière, age 25; Maryse Leclair, age 23; Anne-Marie Lemay, age 27; Sonia Pelletier, age 23; Michèle Richard, age 21; Annie St-Arneault, age 23; and Annie Turcotte, age 21.

Let us all ensure these young women will remain forever in our memory and in our hearts.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to rise today on behalf of my leader, Tim Hudak, and the Progressive Conservative caucus to acknowledge and recognize the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Today we remember the 14 women who were killed by a heinous act of violence at the École Polytechnique in Montreal 21 years ago today. But also today we speak out against the reality that continues of violence against women and to call for action in preventing it in our world.

This tragic incident was and continues to be profoundly troubling because the acts of violence perpetrated on December 6, 1989, were targeted at women simply because they were women who occupied a place in what is a predominantly male-dominated environment, an engineering classroom. We remember today the women who were killed in the Montreal massacre, but we also reflect on the broader issue of violence against women in our society and our world.

While generations of women before us have made incredible strides to ensure equal rights for women, the fact remains that more must be done. Since sexist, anti-feminist attitudes and the lack of real gender equality in society lie at the root of many, if not most, of the acts of violence against women throughout our world, we all share the responsibility for eliminating these attitudes and doing what we personally can to end violence against women. Men and women need to work together.

Positive attitudes adopted at an early age can help put an end to violence before it happens. We need to make sure we do everything we can at that early age to shape the attitudes of our sons and our daughters so that they learn to treat everyone, regardless of gender, with equal dignity and respect. Violence against women is not just a women's issue. Men too have an important role to play in

speaking out against gender-based violence and acting as role models for young men and boys by setting an example based on healthy models of masculinity that do not rely on negative stereotypes of gender roles.

Violence against women in any form is never acceptable. Equally unacceptable is the failure of those who witness it or are aware of its occurrence to speak out and take action against it. When Marc Lépine separated the women from the men in the classroom at the École Polytechnique, he encountered little resistance and few objections. Silence in the face of something so fundamentally wrong is just never an acceptable option. When we respond to violence against women with silence and tolerance, we normalize it, and we tacitly condone it. This must change.

Organizations such as the White Ribbon Campaign and the UN Secretary General's Network of Men Leaders encourage men to speak out against violence against women, and I think we all need to applaud the work that they have undertaken.

So we need to remember that we must change attitudes and we must speak out against gender-based violence if we are to prevent it. Unfortunately, when we take a look at the statistics, violence against women continues to persist. I want to acknowledge the work that is done by the organizations, the houses and the shelters in our province, that support women who are the victims of violence. Regrettably, however, Mr. Speaker, reports of domestic violence have been increasing in recent months and years. According to the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, during times of economic recession, the incidence of violence against women increases. For example, organizations in London, Durham region and Brockville have all reported significant increases in the requests for support in response to the cases of domestic violence. Unfortunately, the concern is that during a recession, violence against women will rise while meaningful action on the issue will fall. I would encourage the government not to ignore this important fact and issue even during these difficult economic times.

So today we remember the women. We remember the horrendous actions of one man on December 6, 1989. We remember that this marked a very tragic day in this country's history. And I join with my colleagues on all sides of this House in remembering the 14 women who lost their lives that day and all those in this province who have as well.

I would encourage all Ontarians today to pledge never to condone or remain silent about violence against women in order that we can, together, continue to make progress toward the eradication of violence against women, not only in our province but throughout our world.

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Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It is an honour and a privilege to rise on behalf of our leader, Andrea Horwath, and also on behalf of the New Democratic Party.

I remember it like it was yesterday—the day that violence came into our church. I was a minister at the time and was there on a Saturday afternoon when this

woman came running through the door. She came running through the door, asking for a safe place, so I put her in my office and closed the door. She was followed by her husband. I want to say that these were not marginalized folk; these were well-respected, well-heeled, well-educated members of our congregation. He went around the church looking for her, banging on doors, opening doors, interrupting yoga classes, children's classes, language classes. I can safely say in this place that, in that place, I was absolutely terrified. What I immediately thought of was, if this is how terrified I am in this moment, imagine what this woman lives with every day of her life. There wasn't enough time to call the police. There wasn't enough time to do anything much, except ultimately pray for her and her family.

The question about violence—domestic violence, in particular—always is, why do women stay? The answer, inevitably, is sadly the same: because they can't afford to leave. She was no exception.

I think of, as the member from Kitchener-Waterloo mentioned, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses' report. Violence is on the increase, and the stay in shelters is lengthening for women—it's not shorter; it's longer—because there is no housing for women to go to that they can afford. Many women find themselves economically trapped with their abusers, with their children.

Certainly the long-awaited housing strategy has not provided an answer. Not one new unit of housing is to be built. Not one new rental supplement is to be paid. Not one new dollar is to be spent. Carol Goar, one of my constituents, says in her article in the Toronto Star that it's "a flurry of announcements but little content" that this government has brought forward when dealing with poverty. We know that poverty, women's poverty, children's poverty, is the root of women's lack of independence and lack of ability to escape violence.

I've asked, and we in the New Democratic Party have asked, for something very simple, something that exists in many workplaces, in many governments around the world: an all-party, all-women's committee, simply to meet and look at the issue of violence and how we could work together to confront it. We have an excellent example: the all-party committee that came together over mental health and addictions. This would be an obvious first step and one that has been called for.

But I want to end on a happy, upbeat note, because where governments fail to tread, women tread anyway. There are three members of this House who have come together: I was privileged to be one of them, the member from Etobicoke Centre and the member from Whitby-Oshawa. We came together and, together with faith leaders across the province of Ontario, we launched what's called Ruth's Daughters of Canada. What Ruth's Daughters of Canada is asking their congregations to do—and there were Roman Catholics, Tibetan Buddhists, members of the Salvation Army, leaders of the United Church, leaders of the Muslim Canadian Congress. All faiths came together in this place last May 6, on Mother's

Day, to launch this initiative. They're calling for chapters to be set up, in all congregations, of women who get together, who pray together, who share together and who do something together about domestic violence. How often do we women get together about just about everything else in places of worship, except this issue, which is our issue, this war against women? And it is a war against women. One in four women will experience abuse or violence in her lifetime. That is millions of women in this province.

I wanted to end on an upbeat note, on something that we women are doing to confront this. But again, as in past years, I plead with my friends across the aisle to take a step, even a small one, towards a long-term answer that only governments can do. Our daughters and our granddaughters are counting on it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members, staff and guests to please rise as we observe a moment of silence in memory of the 14 young women murdered in December 1989.

The House observed a moment's silence.

PETITIONS

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to first recognize all the work done by Heather Rutherford in preparing this petition. It reads as follows:

"Whereas industrial wind turbine developments raise concerns among citizens over environmental impacts as well as health, safety and property values; and

"Whereas the Green Energy Act allows wind turbine developments to bypass municipal approvals and meaningful public input;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment revise the Green Energy Act to allow full public input and municipal approval on all industrial wind farm developments and that the Minister of the Environment conduct a thorough scientific study on health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines."

It's signed by Dave Rutherford and others, and I'm pleased to submit it to Justin, one of the pages in his last few days here.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Sudbury:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning, a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients" under certain conditions; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, "insured PET scans" are performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens” of northeastern Ontario.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Mahir to bring it to the Clerk.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Historical Society, founded in 1888, is a not-for-profit corporation, incorporated by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario April 1, 1899, with a mandate to identify, protect, preserve and promote Ontario’s history; and

“Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario’s cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

“Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario’s greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

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“Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development.”

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks’ table.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas there are over 7,000 people with disabilities waiting for the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services’ special services at home (SSAH) funding and almost 4,000 on wait-lists for Passport funding; and

“Whereas such programs are vital and essential to supporting Ontarians with developmental disabilities, and their families, to participate in community life;

“ARCH Disability Law Centre supported by Family Alliance Ontario, People First of Ontario, Community Living Ontario, Special Services at Home Provincial

Coalition, Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario and the undersigned individuals and organizations urge the Ontario government to take quick action to substantially improve developmental services.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“—Ensure that all qualified Passport and SSAH applicants immediately receive adequate funding;

“—Make the application and funding allocation process transparent; and

“—Ensure that sufficient long-term funding is in place so that eligible Ontarians with disabilities can access the supports and services they need.”

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

“Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

“Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly “to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Donna to deliver it to the clerks.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I have, from the great city of Hamilton, a petition that is exactly the same as the one read by the member from Dufferin–Caledon, and I’ll file it on behalf of the signatories.

POWER PLANT

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has cancelled the Oakville peaker plant, citing a decrease in need for power in that community, proposing to meet needs by better transmission, and despite the fact that the government may face a \$1-billion lawsuit due to the cancellation;

“Whereas the King township peaker plant is going forward, with the Ontario government having shut off debate about the plan at the OMB through regulation,

after failing to provide a proper environmental assessment or community consultation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To give the King township peaker plant and the local community the same consideration as residents of Oakville, and to decide on the future of the peaker plant on a non-partisan basis."

As I am in support of this, I will affix my signature and give it to page Tony.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Steve Clark: I would like to thank Beth French, executive director of the Brockville and District Association for Community Involvement, for sending me this petition from hundreds of people from Leeds-Grenville. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are over 7,000 people with disabilities waiting for the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services' special services at home (SSAH) funding and almost 4,000 on wait-lists for Passport funding; and

"Whereas such programs are vital and essential to supporting Ontarians with developmental disabilities, and their families, to participate in community life;

"ARCH Disability Law Centre supported by Family Alliance Ontario, People First of Ontario, Community Living Ontario, Special Services at Home Provincial Coalition, Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario and the undersigned individuals and organizations urge the Ontario government to take quick action to substantially improve developmental services.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"—Ensure that all qualified Passport and SSAH applicants immediately receive adequate funding;

"—Make the application and funding allocation process transparent; and

"—Ensure that sufficient long-term funding is in place so that eligible Ontarians with disabilities can access the supports and services they need."

I agree with the petition, will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Emily.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government is pushing ahead with the installation of so-called smart meters and mandatory time-of-use billing by June 2011 despite the flaws with the program; and

"Whereas 21 energy distributors, including provincially owned Hydro One, said that the rush to make time of use mandatory by June 2011 doesn't give them time to fix all the problems with the meters, fix bugs with the

software to run them, and to fix the inaccurately high bills they produce as a result; and

"Whereas the Ontario Energy Board, in a letter of August 4, admitted that energy distributors 'may encounter extraordinary and unanticipated circumstances during the implementation' of time of use, and said that 'these matters need to be addressed';

"Whereas relying on computer technology that the energy industry says is not ready, isn't reliable and is making families pay too much on their hydro bills;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To call upon the McGuinty government to suspend the smart meter time-of-use program until billing problems are fixed and Ontario families are given the option of whether to participate in the time-of-use program."

I affix my name in full support.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a number of petitions here, submitted by residents in the constituency of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Keep Ontario Dollars for Ontario Students.

"This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario families are struggling to help put their kids through university;

"Whereas students in Ontario graduate with an average \$26,000 in debt and have the highest tuition and largest class sizes in the country; and

"Whereas Ontario tax dollars should be kept in Ontario to help Ontario students, not sent overseas;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the McGuinty government to cancel its plan to give foreign students scholarships of \$40,000 a year and reinvest these funds in scholarships for Ontario students."

I'm pleased to sign this petition and give it to Elizabeth on her third-last day here at Queen's Park.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

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"Whereas Ontario families are struggling to help put their kids through university;

"Whereas students in Ontario graduate with an average \$26,000 in debt and have the highest tuition and largest class sizes in the country; and

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I affix my name in full support.

TAXATION

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas residents in Leeds–Grenville do not want the McGuinty 13% sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

“Whereas the McGuinty 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$400,000; and

“Whereas the McGuinty 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

“Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families.”

I want to thank Jean Barton from Portland for sending me this petition. I agree with it, will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Emily.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly which reads as follows:

“Whereas there are up to 40,000 Ontarians living with Parkinson's disease, many of whom require speech-language therapy to retain essential verbal communications skills and life-saving swallowing skills; and

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“Whereas speech-language therapy can make the difference between someone with Parkinson's retaining their ability to speak or not, and their ability to swallow or not, yet most Ontarians with Parkinson's are unable to access these services in a timely fashion, many remaining on waiting lists for years while their speaking and swallowing capacity diminishes; and

“Whereas Ontarians with Parkinson's who lose their ability to communicate experience unnecessary social isolation and economic loss due to their inability to participate as full members of their communities; and

“Whereas it is the responsibility of the community care access centres to assign speech-language pathologists to provide therapy to people on the wait-lists, yet people are regularly advised to pay for private therapy if they want timely treatment, but many people living with Parkinson's are already experiencing economic hardship and cannot afford the cost of private therapy;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to call on Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to intervene immediately to ensure that CCACs across Ontario develop a plan to ensure that all Ontarians living with

Parkinson's who need speech-language therapy and swallowing therapy receive the necessary treatment.”

I'm pleased to sign it and support it and present it to Joshua, the page from my riding of Durham, on his third-last day.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas there are over 7,000 people with disabilities waiting for the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services' special services at home (SSAH) funding and almost 4,000 on wait-lists for Passport funding; and

“Whereas such programs are vital and essential to supporting Ontarians with developmental disabilities, and their families, to participate in community life;

“ARCH Disability Law Centre supported by Family Alliance Ontario, People First of Ontario, Community Living Ontario, Special Services at Home Provincial Coalition, Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario and the undersigned individuals and organizations urge the Ontario government to take quick action to substantially improve developmental services.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“—Ensure that all qualified Passport and SSAH applicants immediately receive adequate funding;

“—Make the application and funding allocation process transparent; and

“—Ensure that sufficient long-term funding is in place so that eligible Ontarians with disabilities can access the supports and services they need.”

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that the orders for second and third reading of the following private bills shall be called consecutively and the questions on the motions for second and third reading of the bills be put immediately without debate: Bills Pr37, Pr38 and Pr41; and that Mr. Yakabuski may move the motions for second and third reading of Bill Pr41 on behalf of Mr. Shurman.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.
Motion agreed to.

SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH OF PETERBOROUGH ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2010

Mr. Leal moved second reading of the following bill: Bill Pr37, An Act respecting The Sisters of St. Joseph of the Diocese of Peterborough, in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

SISTERS OF ST. JOSEPH
OF PETERBOROUGH ACT
(TAX RELIEF), 2010

Mr. Leal moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr37, An Act respecting The Sisters of St. Joseph of the Diocese of Peterborough, in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

BIG BAY RESORT
ASSOCIATION ACT, 2010

Mrs. Munro moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr38, An Act respecting Big Bay Resort Association.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

BIG BAY RESORT
ASSOCIATION ACT, 2010

Mrs. Munro moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr38, An Act respecting Big Bay Resort Association.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

TONUM LTD. ACT, 2010

Mr. Yakabuski, on behalf of Mr. Shurman, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr41, An Act to revive Tonum Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

TONUM LTD. ACT, 2010

Mr. Yakabuski, on behalf of Mr. Shurman, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr41, An Act to revive Tonum Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2010
LOI DE 2010 SUR LA SAINTE
GESTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 1, 2010, on the motion for third reading of Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts / Projet de loi 110, Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I am certainly happy to continue my remarks from last week on Bill 110. I just want to set the stage here. Bill 110 is An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts. It's almost like a conundrum here, really. This bill is about a government talking about being good government when most of what they're doing is utterly wrong. In fact, there's a list of items—with your indulgence, Madam Speaker.

The Premier, today, in one of his answers said—you want to know about the future?—"The best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour." That's an old axiom that's often referred to, and from that premise I'm going to refer to the Premier's remarks by saying—for instance, they were elected in 2003. I remember the Premier in the ads leaning up against a lamppost saying, "I will not raise your taxes," and then he said, "I won't lower them either."

That's a conundrum right there because we now have two of the largest tax increases in Ontario's history. We also have the largest debt in Ontario's history—the largest debt in all of Canada. You can't have it both ways.

I agree that many things in the economy are important—and society and our social awareness are all important. Our leader, Tim Hudak, reminds us all the time of the importance of having a strong, competitive economy so that you can fund the social programs that are so important to make Ontario the best place to live. But where are we? We're basically in last place.

This is one of the things he did. He brought in the health tax in 2003 and, just recently, brought in the HST, which is about a \$3.5-billion to \$4-billion deal for them. I can tell you right now that those two taxes are still hard for people to digest.

Now, we just dealt with Bill 135, which was the interim budget response. In fairness, what did they do in that bill and the previous bill? I think it was Bill 122. What did they do? It's quite treacherous. Maybe that's an incorrect word, but it's quite tricky anyway. They promised everybody in Ontario that they would reduce their energy bill by 10%. It sounds like a fairly respectable idea since people are struggling—in fact, they're bent over carrying around their energy bills. So, what they've done is, they're going to reduce your bill by 10%, but they didn't tell you the whole story.

In fairness, the NDP had a resolution here one day, which was debated and defeated by the McGuinty government, which was going to make Premier McGuinty,

his Minister of Finance and his Minister of Energy eliminate the HST on energy. Well, they voted against that.

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Now, since that tax is in place—and let's keep it simple for the people of Ontario, whom I represent—let's say your bill is \$100. When you put the HST on that, that makes it \$113, and you're going to get 10% back on that \$113. Ten percent of \$113 is about \$11, okay? You're already paying \$13. They're paying you back with your own money. So don't be hoodwinked.

How much does this cost? It's important to put this in, because the people of Ontario pay for everything we do here. They pay me, they pay you, they pay the Premier. They pay everybody through tax revenue, basically. So how are they going to pay for this? I'm told by the auditors that this move in Bill 135 will cost about \$1.3 billion.

Good government? They already have a deficit of almost \$19 billion. Let's put that in reference now: If the budget is \$100 billion—it's actually a little over that, \$106 billion or \$107 billion—and of that they're missing or are in deficit around \$20 billion, they have a 20% deficit on the whole budget. They're in the hole. It's the largest deficit in the history of this province.

If they already have a deficit of around \$20 billion and they're going to borrow another \$1.3 billion to pay back this 10%, my goodness, the children are going to be paying for this. You can't have it both ways. You've got to be forthright with the people of Ontario.

When I see a bill entitled—here it is; I've spoken on this two or three times—An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts, I'm sad to say that my commentary will be pretty much uniform, in that it's a bad bill by a bad government. That's basically the best way to summarize it.

I think they've tried. When the Premier first came here in 2003, the people of Toronto, the Toronto Star—everybody—loved him. I don't know what's happened to him. He's sort of lost his way. He's lost his conviction. If he had been listening—I know that I'm listening, and I know the member from Peterborough is listening to his constituents most of the time, except on the hospital, where they're laying people off all the time.

Nonetheless here is what I see: Seniors in my riding are the people who lived through the Depression, fought the wars and made this country what it is. They are very reluctant to call or complain—some of the younger groups will complain about what day it is. Nonetheless, these younger people should be worried too, because this is all future debt. The debt has doubled in the last seven years.

I'm almost discouraged. I've got to continue; there are only four minutes left so it will not be hard. The thing is, if this continues the way I see it, seniors may not be able to stay in their own homes. Then I look at one of the strategies called aging at home. Our critic from Whitby-Oshawa, Ms. Elliott, is strongly supportive of making sure that people are allowed to age with dignity in their homes. But we determined that under the government's

current plan, the aging at home strategy is actually the aging alone strategy, because there's no one coming to help you out.

They also have a plan under the LHINs to eliminate \$1 million in emergencies. Do you know how they will do it? They're going to send you home quicker and sicker, and there are not enough home supports now. We met this past week with the CCACs in my riding and in Durham, and they are concerned. They don't want to speak too loudly, because it would upset the Premier and the finance minister and potentially the Minister of Health, but I can feel very comfortable that the people I speak to and believe in, and that I serve, say they've gone too far, too fast. Instead of putting the foot on the brake, they've got the foot on the gas.

The eco tax is another thing that I'm worried about. They didn't clearly, in any definite way say, "That's the end of that." If I look at the eco tax, it was a cash grab. All of us want to make sure that the right products get into landfill and the wrong products don't get into the landfill. The eco tax was a tax on things like batteries and fire extinguishers. There's an argument to be made, but the proper policy would be to end the pollution at the source. Disincent businesses to create products that create a hazard to the environment. Don't tax it at the end, at consumption. That's not solving the problem. That's creating a revenue flow.

Good government: Who are they kidding? If the people don't watch out—I'm not being unkind. I think they care almost as much as our leader, Tim Hudak, does. But what's wrong is they have no plan.

The energy file is in complete and utter disarray. Imagine trying to power industry with wind power. Imagine. It's a wonderful idea conceptually, but it's an economic policy we're concerned about. They're treating it as a social policy. Imagine trying to power the economy of Ontario, once the greatest in the country, the most industrialized in the country, and now arguably shedding jobs quicker than the snowflakes that I saw falling this morning on the way to work—it's tragic; it's concerning.

I cannot support this bill for one moment. It's just one more example of a government that has lost its way. I don't say that in a negative way. I think the people of Ontario are catching on.

Our leader, Tim Hudak—I have the confidence. We met with people last week—he's touring the province—and I could feel what I'd call the embracing of the concept and energy of Tim Hudak. I actually felt it. I've been here for 15 years, and I sensed the change. I know the content is there. I know that Premier McGuinty had that once, back in 2002 or something. But now it's 2010-11. Times have changed. The people are catching on.

The economy's going south and the spending is going north. We have a convergence of issues here. We're paying more and we're getting less. I see it in health care. I see it even in the all-day kindergarten. Did you read the paper today? It's not funded. Good idea; bad policy and implementation.

I look forward to the remarks on my few moments of comments.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm going to have a chance to speak to this bill in my own right in a few moments' time, and it's going to be my lead. My lead was deferred from when this bill was first called for third reading.

I'm having a hard time getting past the very front page, because as you know, the title of a bill is a debatable matter. It's a debatable matter and it's voted on, so I'm going to find myself, I think, stuck for an hour debating the title, "An Act to promote good government."

In the context of debating the title, it's going to be necessary to make frequent reference to the 2010 annual report of the Auditor General, because, let me tell you, there's no good government talked about in this very, very lengthy report by the Auditor General, no good government at all. As a matter of fact, if you read the Auditor General's report, you'll know what most Ontarians know: Things are getting worse and worser.

No wonder 76% of Ontarians think another party should be in power rather than this one. No wonder 86% of Ontarians say that they're worse off now than they were two years ago. No wonder Ipsos Reid, notwithstanding that it screwed up the polling when it came to Smitherman and Ford and the mayoralty race, has this Liberal government trailing and in something akin to freefall. Good government, my foot.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Only your foot?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm looking forward to the chance to debate this bill.

The member for Kenora–Rainy River is diligently, as usual, in the House and he'll be speaking to it later this afternoon. I suspect he may be as concerned as I am about this government calling itself good in any way, shape or form.

I suppose the only thing that's good is that in October of next year, less than 12 months' time now, Ontarians will have a chance to tell folks what they really think about this government's HST, *inter alia*.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

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Mr. Ted McMeekin: I think the member from Dufferin is absolutely right. He says that we need to be forthright with the people of Ontario, and we need to do that. We don't need to sweep things under the rug; we need to be straight up with the people of Ontario.

He's also said that the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. Come a year from now, I think we'll be reminding the people of Ontario of that quote as well, because that is paramount to the kind of discussion that we have in this place, where we continually see the politics of complaint here. Anyone can stand on a soapbox and scream about what's wrong, but to be effective, you need to be instructive and constructive. You can't just be critical; you need to come up with ideas. It always takes more time, more energy and, frankly, more in-

tegrity to get invested in that kind of a process, but that's what we need to do in this place—focus on that.

The member from Dufferin—and I want to keep my remarks to what he said—suggested that—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Durham, not Dufferin.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Durham, sorry. See what kind of an impression you've made?

He suggested that we're moving too far, too fast. Well, if we're moving too fast to restore peace in our school system—I remember when teachers were lining up to take early retirement—and to restore peace and stability in our health care system; if we're moving too fast to provide more doctors, nurses and home care—home care, by the way, is up 60% in the last four years; and if we're moving too quickly in restricting tuition increases for post-secondary students and assisting our disabled and those in need of a social housing strategy, then we plead guilty. We're moving too quickly.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member from Durham spoke eloquently, as always. It was a truncated speech, so you had to be here for the first part of his speech. I think I split my time with the member for that the opening hour lead. He was eloquent, as always, bringing the fact of what they call good government and pointing out some of the inequities that the government just doesn't seem to get.

So much of it revolves around the management of an issue. There are many ideas that come from the government that have merit, a lot of merit, yet they just don't seem to get managed very well. It goes from the planning stage into implementation, and somehow it gets a little distorted. We're seeing it this week—we're talking a lot about the distortion that's taking place at the Niagara Parks Commission, where they talk about being frugal, they talk about having no increase in wages or no cost-of-living increases, and here's the chairman, here's a member of an Ontario parks commission, who's trying to double their salary. The implementation just doesn't get through. It just doesn't work, and that's always difficult. It's embarrassing, I'm sure, for the government—at least it should be embarrassing for the government—and the government doesn't take the decisive action that it should be taking.

In politics, you always have difficult times. The thing is to solve the problem and get it off the front pages of the paper. The government isn't doing that as well. They seem to be afloat, they seem to be at sea in not managing the issue very well. They come up with these great ideas, and then they fail to manage the program—and the member for Durham pointed that out, I thought, very eloquently.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I was here to listen to my colleague from Durham. Once again, while I do not often agree with some of the positions taken by members of the Conservative caucus, I do think the member from

Durham, in the length and breadth of his speech, in fact laid out what is a central problem for this government.

Some of this goes back, of course, to the eHealth situation, where the government was boasting that it was investing in e-health and it was in the forefront of e-health. Then there was a report from an officer of this House, who concluded that \$1 billion had been blown on eHealth under this government and there was little to show for it.

After that happened, the government made many pronouncements about good government; that it was going to make sure this didn't happen again. Well, not long after that, it was disclosed that, for example, all kinds of consultants and lobbyists, many of whom were former staffers of cabinet ministers or former staffers in the Premier's office, were in fact everywhere in the Ministry of Health insisting on very large payments and, of course, what they promised to hospitals and homes for the aged and others was insider access to cabinet ministers. And we heard more talk about good government. Now, most recently, we have the fiasco at the Niagara Parks Commission, and once again we hear more talk of good government from this outfit, but we don't see it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Durham has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm listening and thanking the members who commented. The member from Welland spoke of the Auditor General's report and I'm looking forward—I think he's the next speaker and I'm sure his hour will be informative and perhaps entertaining, or perhaps entertaining and informative—whatever sequence there.

Also, the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale, probably indirectly, talked about—he was asking what we would do, in looking at the past. The one thing you could count on in the Mike Harris days—nothing is perfect, I understand that, but at least he kept his word. That's most important to remember that. What you say is what you should do and you should let the people decide at the end of the day. And I can only say—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Madam Speaker, see, that's what they want; I'm just saying.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Halton, I thought most importantly, brought up the issue of the Niagara Parks Commission. I see that the minister is in here, Mr. Chan, and he knows himself that the Niagara Parks Commission was out of control. He has a script that he's told to read; I understand that. I understand he just reads the notes they give him not to get into trouble.

But I think the best remarks: The member from Kenora-Rainy River was right. He mentioned some of the bad government things, sort of like the eHealth decision. We all know the auditor caught it; it was \$1 billion wasted, money that could have gone to seniors and health care, money that went into the pockets of people who maybe shouldn't have got it. I don't want to get into the mire here, but that's the fact. The auditor said it. I

think he said a lot of things and talked about eHealth and the Niagara Parks Commission, as I recall.

So we're on to you, the people of Ontario are on to you. This is not good government. This is a government in decline.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Here we are. It's Monday and we're only here for three more days before we have the modest Christmas break until—what?—February 22 or so? Nice work if you can get it.

I do want to indicate to the pages, because, of course, this is their last week here too before the Christmas break, that they've been a very impressive group of young people, a delight to work with. Yet again, we had a sibling page; that's happened quite a few times in the 22 or so years that I've been here. We had Josh as a page whose brother Kevin had been a page before, and that's always a nice thing to see. You'll recall a couple years ago we had pages who were twins. Do you remember the twins? Of course, you can't be a page more than once, so this one young fellow is a page and then six months later he appears to come back again and we wondered how it happened, but of course it was a twin brother.

Jeez, good government. Good government, good grief, my goodness. The Auditor General's report today: Discharge of hospital patients—50,000 Ontarians were waiting in hospital in 2009 to be discharged because of delays in arranging post-discharge care. Fifty thousand are in beds in hospitals long after the time when they should have been discharged because the post-discharge care wasn't available to them.

I don't know about where you come from, Speaker, but where I come from it's a heck of a lot cheaper to have a care worker come in for an hour or two hours a day, even if it's seven days a week, than it is to keep people in hospital. And, as the Auditor General points out, people get sick in hospitals. The sooner you're out of the hospital, the less likely you are to pick up something that somebody else brought into the hospital.

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I don't know—just inadequate resources, improper management of post-discharge care, like medication management plans, and lack of oversight to ensure that the needs of patients are met. How can this government look people in the eye and hold up this good government bill when one of them, one of those Ontarians, or a sibling or a parent or a child or a spouse, was one of those 50,000 Ontarians who were being kept in hospitals longer than need be because there wasn't adequate post-discharge care? That's not good government.

Let's keep going. Ontario bungled the federal-provincial jobs stimulus funding. It botched it. It screwed it up. It mucked it up badly. It was just an incredible foul-up. As of March 31, 2010, the end of the first year of a two-year program, less than \$510 million, or only about 16% of the total \$3.1 billion committed by the federal and provincial governments, had actually been spent. It's as if somehow the government figures we don't have a

problem out there with unemployment, that we don't really need those jobs that this infrastructure spending was going to create. Look, we all know that the infrastructure spending doesn't create full-time jobs, by and large, but, by gosh, where I come from, down in communities like Wainfleet or Port Colborne or Welland or Thorold or St. Catharines, some highway construction, some bridge construction, some sewer repairs, some water pipe repairs, some road repairs, some road building could provide some awfully welcome jobs in tough, tough, tough times.

Only 7,000 jobs occurred as a result of that expenditure of about 16% of the total funds available, instead of the 25,000 jobs that should have been created. The way I calculate it, this government blew 18,000 jobs; this government squandered 18,000 jobs. Huge, huge unemployment levels already in the province of Ontario, and this government is just so out of touch, so aloof, so disdainful that it shrugs off 18,000 jobs. Bill 110 is called An Act to promote good government. What's good about blowing 18,000 jobs? You blew it. You haven't even got the courage to say you're sorry. You don't even have the courtesy to look those unemployed folks in the eye and tell them that you squandered 18,000 jobs, and maybe you wish you hadn't.

When it comes down to the 16% of the funds available being spent, we find out that some of the deadlines for review of applications were just two days. That meant that there probably wasn't a very efficient prioritization of where that money was spent. You know what that causes one to suspect, don't you, Speaker? Remember Collegiate, the little end-of-the-year spending spree when any number of organizations were hand-picked? Nobody is saying they weren't in and of themselves deserving, but there was a whole lot of queue-jumping, wasn't there? Hand-picked—I can tell you the Auditor General's summary in his chapter on infrastructure stimulus spending causes one to make some pretty frightening inferences. Shall we go on?

Oh, yes, MPAC and property assessment—wow. About 8% of Ontario property owners have properties that are assessed at more than 20% above their sales price. Yikes. MPAC is failing to investigate these over-assessments, and in almost no cases is correcting their mistakes. Of course, mistakes like this wouldn't be made nearly as often if MPAC actually inspected the properties, yet they only inspect once every 18 years even though the already inadequate policy calls for an inspection once every 12 years. That means people have been getting ripped off, ripped off by this government. Over-assessments of 20%—do the math.

As if property taxes were not onerous enough already for hard-working folks, and as if the cost of heating your home, lighting it and insuring it weren't already expensive enough, this government bungled, botched, screwed up, mucked up when it came to the MPAC file and municipal property assessment. Good government? I don't think so. Do you? But there's more.

Let's talk about the Niagara Parks Commission for a few minutes. The Niagara Parks Commission, which

appears to be a cesspool of corruption during the course of the last seven years of Liberal stewardship, always has been a plum appointment. A seat on that commission was always considered a real prize, the brass ring, if you will, if you were a political friend, hack or lackey. Now we're starting to learn why.

Heck, I got more phone calls in the last week from folks asking me if I can help them get on the Niagara Parks Commission than I've ever had for any political appointment anywhere in the province of Ontario. I've got doctors, lawyers, engineers and veterinarians calling and asking me if I can get them appointed to the Niagara Parks Commission because it's nice work if you can get it. People are using the commission public money as their own personal ATM account, and all this government does—well, the minister somehow keeps challenging somebody here to a debate at 6 o'clock tomorrow night. I have no idea what he's talking about. If he's talking about one of those five-minute—when you talk about one of those five-minute late shows, that's hardly a debate. Just suck it up; fess up. You screwed it up; fix it. But find out what happened and hold people accountable.

The minister recites the mantra of moving forward. Fine, move forward. But if you go to your bank and find out that somebody emptied your account on you fraudulently, what do you do? Smile at the bank manager and say, "It's okay. I'm just going to move forward"? You want to find out who stole the money. You want to find out how it could happen. If you come home and you find your front door smashed in and your big-screen television gone, along with the Blu-ray player, what do you do? Call the cops and say, "Don't worry about it, though. I just want to move forward"? You want somebody to be held accountable, don't you?

That's all the opposition has been asking for. That's why. Because the government refused to do anything at all—zip, nothing. That's why Andrea Horwath, leader of the New Democratic Party, has written to Ontario's Auditor General asking him to investigate what the heck's been going on at the Niagara Parks Commission.

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We're not talking about somebody pilfering paperclips here. We're not talking about somebody using the photocopier to duplicate their kid's grade 12 essay. We're talking about some pretty big bucks. And we have no idea, and nor does the minister have any idea, just how much has been pilfered from the Niagara Parks Commission. We do know that that incredibly successful body, the jewel of Ontario, has suffered a loss for the last four years—unprecedented. Now we know where the money's been going. I suspect that what we've heard about is only the tip of the iceberg. I don't know that for a fact. And none of you ever will until we investigate it. That's why the NDP called for the Auditor General to go in there and, quite frankly, if need be, call the cops too. Because there could well have been crimes being committed; it certainly isn't out of the question.

I heard the minister the other day talk about "unfounded allegations." What an intensively stupid thing to say.

How does he know they're unfounded if he hasn't investigated? Allegations are precisely that: allegations. Oh, slowly, slowly, slowly, like a tap dripping, we're learning some of the real facts, we're getting some of the hard numbers. And there's more than enough here. The public of Ontario know it. Folks down there in Niagara think that this stinks to high heaven. It's got a hum about it, an odour about it that is unbearable. And Niagarans, just like people across Ontario, expects good government to do something about it. This government hasn't even sat on its hands. It would be giving them too much credit to suggest that they sat on their hands. They've been twiddling their thumbs—hardly good government. Yet we've got a bill before us today that's called "An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts." I suppose "An Act to accelerate the election by 10 months" might be a more appropriate one if we are going to achieve good government.

The Family Responsibility Office: I remember when the member for Nickel Belt, Shelley Martel, broke into that place and got videotape of a Family Responsibility Office that was in a shambles. It wasn't even in a shambles because it hadn't even come out of the box yet. The Attorney General sat right about there, and every day—every day—Shelley Martel, the member for Nickel Belt, or the leader, Howard Hampton, or I, was standing up explaining to the Attorney General that something was wrong up there in North Toronto. You remember what happened. You recall that they shut down seven, eight, nine or 10 local offices, regional offices, and consolidated them. And Charlie Harnick, who was the Attorney General, insisted day after day after day that the place was up and running, that the consolidated office was working, that it was buzzing along just fine. And then Shelley Martel broke in—I'm surprised she never got arrested—with a video camera, came back to Queen's Park and the whole world saw the videotape. The Liberal critic was so quick to jump on that. Boy, oh boy. Even though Shelley Martel did all the hard work, the Liberal critic was so quick to jump on it and join in the criticism of, as it was, the Conservative government of the day.

Well, what does the Auditor General tell us today? After seven years, the McGuinty government has failed to fix the failures of the family service office. That was back in 1996, that particular exposé. I well remember when that particular exposé took place; that was 14 years ago. After seven years of McGuinty Liberal government, over 100,000 Ontario families are waiting for support payments and being forced to survive without billions of dollars that they have a right to.

Everybody is paying for it. Everybody is paying for the negligence, the outright negligence, of this government. Over 20,000 families have been forced onto social assistance. Isn't that sad?

The Liberals were just happy as pigs in a barnyard when we blew the whistle on the FRO office back in 1996. As a matter of fact, I'm sure they were reminding voters about it in the election in 2003. But seven years later, the Family Responsibility Office is still in shambles

and 100,000 people are not getting their support payments.

Look, support payments—98.9% of them are kids. These are kids going without support. The Family Responsibility Office is failing in its responsibility to ensure that the payments are being made and that they're being sent on, you see, because one of the big problems that the FRO always had, and still does, apparently, is not that, usually, the father isn't paying the money but that the office isn't getting it out to the families.

There isn't one of you who hasn't had that come to your constituency office at least once a month, or more, where the estranged mom or divorced mom or separated mom comes in with her former spouse. They both sit down. They show you his pay stub, where the money has been deducted. The employer isn't pocketing the money; it's getting sent on to the Downsview FRO office, but it isn't getting out to the moms and the kids.

Think about where we are. It's December 6 today. Maybe some of these families, or at least the kids, were planning on a thing called Christmas. You may not think it's such a big deal, but kids do. These families, instead of having that little bit of extra money that they need to put a ham or a turkey or a tourtière on the Christmas table, never mind some presents under the tree, are being forced onto welfare; 20,000 have been forced onto welfare.

This government, this Liberal government, has never set clear targets. It has had some vague, multi-year plans.

In 2003, seven years ago, the same year that this government was first elected, the Auditor General identified lack of action to ensure payment of child support. The same problem still exists seven years later: \$1.6 billion in payments outstanding; only one in four cases acted upon every year—only 25% of the files get any attention—80% of the calls never get through to call centres. You know what that's like, don't you? You may not have had to call the Family Responsibility Office, but have you ever had to call Rogers Cable, or Bell, for that matter? You want to reach down that telephone line and grab somebody by the throat, and that's about your cable being fuzzy; it's not about not having money for your kids. It's about you not being able to get the high definition on channel 4; it's not about you not having money for your kids. But 80% of calls never get through to the call centre. Good grief.

Good government? My foot. That's not good government; that's bad government—bad government.

These guys blew \$21 million on a new IT system, and all we get is a press release saying that delinquent fathers are going to have their cars seized for a week. I don't want their cars; I want their money. I don't want them in jail; I want their money.

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It's easy to fix the easy cases. The easy cases don't even need an FRO, do they? The easy cases don't need a Family Responsibility Office. It's the tough cases that need a Family Responsibility Office. By God, we've got files in my constituency office where we know where the

husband is; where he works; what vehicle he's driving, for that matter; his telephone number; and his SIN number, and somehow, the FRO can't get their act together—this government's FRO. It's not the FRO from 1996; that was 14 years ago. It's the FRO of 2003-10. Here, we've got the government today expecting us to be happy about their bill, Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts. I never thought I'd spend this much time debating the title of a bill on third reading, but let's move on.

The Auditor General's report when it comes to emergency rooms: Down in Niagara, this government is notorious for shutting down emergency rooms—Port Colborne emergency room, shut down; Fort Erie emergency room, in Mr. Craitor's Niagara Falls riding, shut down. What the Auditor General tells us today is that since April 2008, emergency room wait times have not significantly improved or met provincial targets. What's this hooey we get from them on a daily basis—that is to say, from the Liberals—about shortening emergency room waits? Why, it's just not the case. It's bull feathers. Since April 2008, emergency room wait times have not significantly improved or met provincial targets. There are problems with ensuring adequate nursing staff at emergency rooms and huge costs because of overtime paid due to inadequate nursing supply. So what's this bull spit that this government gives us about hiring more nurses?

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Bull spit.

We've got a problem in staffing emergency rooms when it comes to nursing. There's an inadequate number of nurses. That's part of the problem with inappropriate emergency room waits. Lower-acuity patients make up about 30% of ER visits and could be treated elsewhere. The Auditor General found that high-acuity patients—these are the real emergencies—are actually faring worse.

The pay-for-results program has been a failure. The hospital that performed the worst received the most money in year two. That's just the opposite of what it's supposed to be, isn't it? Good government? I don't think so.

Home care services, CCAC: Oh my, oh my. As if there isn't a single member here who isn't aware of the reality in their own community about the inadequate resources for people at home. As a matter of fact—you heard me in the Legislature not even a month ago talking about a case down Welland way where the hospital couldn't discharge this patient because the CCAC didn't have sufficient staff to meet the X number of hours per month to assist that person in their home. We talked about this just a few minutes ago as well. That person is costing—what's a day in the hospital worth: \$400, \$500, \$600? It's huge. And what do a couple of hours a day of personal aid from a support worker cost: \$20, \$30, \$35, \$40? And that's a person at home, where they're at less risk of either making somebody else sick or getting sick themselves. Never mind being cruel, it doesn't make good fiscal sense.

Some CCACs have people on wait-lists for care for as long as—how long?—262 days. Some clients are waiting as long as 15 months for an assessment—15 months. You could be dead. Well, maybe they're counting on you simply dying. Or in 15 months' time your recovery is complete so you don't need CCAC assistance any more. Fifteen months for an assessment? That's in the Auditor General's 2010 annual report.

CCAC is a complete failure. This government has bungled it, botched it, screwed it up, mucked it up, made a mess of it. It's made it worse, not better. That's why 86% of Ontarians feel they're worse off today than they were two years ago. That's why, in that Ipsos Reid poll that I'm inclined to refer to so often, 76% of Ontarians think a party other than the Liberal Party should be the governing party.

I know the polls are snapshots. So next week a poll is going to say it's only 72% of Ontarians that want a party other than Liberals in power. Okay; or maybe it'll be 80%. Who knows? But you do know that most Ontarians, the vast majority of Ontarians—and you don't need a pollster to tell you this; you don't need somebody with the slide show, the graphs and charts and trend lines to tell you this. Go to a church basement; go to a supermarket on a Saturday; go to a fundraiser for your kid's elementary school.

When I was a kid—that was a long time ago, in the 1950s—we had fundraisers too but that's so that kids, as a matter of fact, could take a bus to Queen's Park. Remember? You don't, because that was in the 1950s. That was something exceptional. That was the proverbial, classic end-of-the-school-year class trip. You don't see very many busloads of kids coming to Queen's Park any more, do you? Least of all from places that are more than a few kilometres away, because the fundraising that people are doing in the schools now is for core educational supplies and materials, never mind the notes and letters they constantly get from parents who are just shaking their heads about various user fees and school supply fees that elementary and high school kids are having imposed on them.

What does the Auditor General have to say about casino gaming regulation? Lots. Don't forget, this is the government, the Liberal McGuinty government, that created that wonderful Poker Lotto seven days a week; not Wednesdays and Saturdays any more—seven days a week. You can't win if you don't play. It's a mug's game. The people of Ontario are getting mugged by this government.

We learned today that—I'm going to get back to casino and gaming—the government has imported New Jersey's rules for mixed martial arts. Fine. As I recall, there'll be no biting allowed, no spitting and no groin attacks. I suppose that's good too. It's not that they won't be allowed, but it'll be considered a foul if it happens.

The other thing that was revealed today is that this government, which currently taxes the gross receipts of boxing events 2%, will be taxing mixed martial arts 5%. That's in addition to this government's new HST that

they'll be taxing on the price of admission. Do you understand what is happening? These mixed martial arts are huge, huge events; they'll talk about places, I presume, like Rogers stadium—SkyDome—tens of thousands of people. So the government taxes your ticket when you go in and then taxes another 5% of the gross receipts of the event.

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For people who wondered how it was that Premier McGuinty could flip-flop, flip-flop, around mixed martial arts—you'll recall that one day the Premier is saying, "It's not a priority" and the next day he's all excited. He's growing a Hulk Hogan moustache. He's got the Speedo and the tights on, and he's ready to jump in the ring.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's true. One day the Premier says, "Mixed martial arts isn't on the radar screen; it's not on my agenda." The next day, as I say, he's got the leotards and the cape on, and he's ready to jump in the ring and do, I guess, anything as long as it's not biting, spitting or groin attacks. It's because of the money. Follow the money: HST on the admission ticket plus 5% of gross receipts.

I warn those folks in the boxing world that the 5% rake on MMA take will soon come to the world of boxing. What that means is that it will be even harder, because boxing, in huge parts of Ontario, just doesn't have the audience or market it once had. Mixed martial arts is far more dangerous, I suppose, and the audience it draws is one that wants the more extreme—it's called "extreme."

So, Premier McGuinty followed the money. If he doesn't get it from you, if he doesn't take it from you, if he doesn't pick your pocket at the mixed martial arts event down at SkyDome or wherever you happen to be in Ontario, he's going to get it from you at the casino or at the corner store checkout counter.

Mr. McGuinty says he's a family man. As a matter of fact, he often talks about his children and his mother. He makes reference to his kids lobbying him for one thing or another—he does. He brings Poker Lotto to Ontario, so you don't just buy your tickets on Wednesday and Saturday; you buy them on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Then he announces Internet gambling. Is that good government?

We learned just recently a shocking report that the rate of gambling problems/addictions among younger people is accelerating. It's not hard to figure out. Young people are being reared on Internet games. I can't remember who it was that told me—it might have been you—that they've done studies on kids who do texting on their BlackBerrys. They ring doorbells with their thumb rather than with their forefinger because they're so used to texting with their thumbs.

Honest, I have not used a BlackBerry yet. I don't know why. I've just never used one. But I see some people with the thumbs just a-goin'. I also see people so incredibly disconnected. I have an apartment here in

Toronto, as most out-of-town member do. I'm on the 22nd floor. The good thing about being on the 22nd floor is that you see more on the way down. If you're on the second floor, you don't see very much, because you're only going down one floor.

I get on at the 22nd floor; there are a lot of young people in the building. Honest, they're in the building—this is 6:30, 7, 7:30 in the morning—and they're already plugged in and texting. Nothing is more irritating—for me, at least; I don't know about you—than when you can hear the booming from earphones. If people want to wire themselves up like that, God bless them, but when you can hear that scratchy booming, it's irritating. They're listening to music plus texting. Again, it's a generational thing, isn't it? Maybe it's a cultural thing. But these people walk out on to the street, and they don't hear anything. They don't hear if there are birds. Mostly there are pigeons in Toronto, but they do coo in the morning—that's right—because they're rock doves. They don't hear the pigeons cooing. They don't hear the sound of the ambulance coming down the street, or the fire truck. They're wired.

The neuroscience of computer gambling is pretty sophisticated stuff, but it's understood quite well. The people who manufacture these games—it's not just Internet poker. It's Internet gambling of all sorts. We're learning that there's a growing rate of young children acquiring gambling habits, gambling addictions. The report talked about 12-, 13-, 14-year-old kids.

Premier McGuinty—used to be Premier Dad; now he's Premier Bad—wanted to protect people from all sorts of things, and New Democrats supported him. We wanted to protect kids from second-hand smoke, for instance, in cars. New Democrats said, "Bang on. Good idea." That was Premier Dad. Now he's Premier Bad, and he wants those kids—rather than inhaling second-hand smoke, he wants them sitting in their bedrooms, 12- and 13-year-olds, just blowing Mommy's credit card, or Daddy's, on an Internet gaming site. We know that that type of gambling is the most addictive type of gambling, because it's all the senses.

I might have told you—I've told you before: When I was a kid, I grew up down in the south end of Welland. At Blackbeard's pool hall on Saturday nights, they'd have an all-night poker game, or in Nick Penkov's room upstairs at Bill's pool hall. I used to go to these and I'd get the guys sandwiches. I was only 15 years old, right? I'd get the guys sandwiches and a pop or a beer. Every once in a while, some big bruiser from Niagara Falls would say, "Hey, kid, play my hand for me. I gotta go to the washroom." Then you're shaking, right, because these guys are big guys, and they're playing pretty big stakes. But that's okay.

But you see, that's a far cry from Internet gaming. First of all, seven card stud has a significant amount of skill attached to it; you go around the table, placing bets and making decisions. Internet gambling requires no thought process. It's as basic and Pavlovian as you could ever get. It's all about bells, bright lights, ringing and the

impression—we do know this from the data. Slots are the best example. Slots are designed to pay out, but never as much as you put in, and to pay out pretty frequently. That's why people are attracted to slots. There are no one-armed bandits. You don't even have to do that anymore. They'll pay out every once in a while. That's why this Poker Lotto and these numbers games that pay out \$2 and \$5 and \$10 are so insidious. Yeah, every once in a while you win two bucks or a free ticket, or you win five bucks or 10 bucks, and that sets you up for another 50 weeks of losing.

Premier McGuinty doesn't think it's enough for people to travel to Niagara Falls or Windsor or Casino Rama to blow their hard-earned money. He now wants people to do it in the privacy and comfort of their own homes.

What that means is that you're going to increase the rate of gambling amongst young people, because there's no way of screening a computer-operated game for age; none whatsoever. You're going to increase the amount of young gambling. Also, because you're putting them in front of a computer screen—bells, whistles, all the razzmatazz—you're going to generate higher and higher rates of gambling addiction amongst 12-, 13-, 14- and 15-year-olds, which means, of course, they're going to become gambling adults.

We have warning signs on packages of tobacco, rightly so; I think we've got warning signs on liquor bottles, rightly so.

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If this government was serious about addressing problem gambling or cautioning people—I saw the ad the other day in the paper about "Don't play more than you can afford." That's like telling a smoker, "Don't smoke more than you should." I used to smoke; a whole lot of people used to.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Hard to believe.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Hard to believe.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I smoked tobacco, as well.

Interjection: Did you inhale?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Yes, we want to know: Did you inhale?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Of course I inhaled. Why would you bother going to all that trouble if you didn't inhale, Ms. Dombrowsky?

I understand how hard it is to quit smoking, but the whole idea about tobacco and tobacco companies is, if people only smoked one cigarette a day, the tobacco companies would go bankrupt.

In my family, when I was a kid—my parents worked hard—there was a bottle of Black Velvet rye that was in a den closet, and that bottle would last for three years. The liquor companies don't make money off people who drink a shot of rye at Christmastime, and that's why the beer companies cater to young people. The beer companies expect people not just to have a bottle of beer; it's got to be party time, because the beer companies don't make any money off the household that buys a case of beer a year. And casinos don't make any money from the

senior who, God bless his or her soul, shows up on a seniors' bus with \$100 in their pocket. That type of consumer doesn't sustain the industry. It costs far more than that \$100 per customer to maintain the whole operation. The casino needs problem gamblers, just like tobacco companies need addicted smokers.

This government is a party to some of the cruellest and foulest behaviour that one can imagine. This government, with its expansion of gaming—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. McGuinty's bringing Internet gaming to your kid's bedroom. You no longer have to shave and shower and put on maybe a new suit and drive to Casino Rama or Niagara Falls or Windsor. You do it at home.

The casino phenomenon has served only the government of Ontario and has served only the passion that Premier McGuinty has for picking people's pockets and for taking Ontarians, grabbing them by the ankles, turning them upside down and shaking every last nickel and dime out of them. If McGuinty can't empty your pockets with his HST, he'll do it with his not-so-smart, dumb-and-dumber meters. If the McGuinty government can't get it out of you, or enough out of you, with that, he'll get you at the casino. And if the McGuinty government can't get you at the casino, they'll get you at the corner store. And they won't just get you, they'll get your kids.

You know what? My corner store, at the corner of Denistoun and West Main Street, one block from my old house on Bald Street—I'm in there often. I live in a really mixed community. We've got cops living there, factory workers, lawyers, and we also have a whole lot of single moms and people on social assistance and very low-income people. It's a delightful neighbourhood.

I could care less if some high roller goes to Niagara and blows his or her brains out on the roulette wheel. Who cares? But \$2 tickets are just like the cheap cigarettes from the smoke shacks. They're what enable young kids to gamble, and they're what enable low-income people to gamble: people who can least afford it. That's one heck of a practical joke by Mr. McGuinty on the people of Ontario, isn't it?

The Auditor General points out that the electronic gaming branch doesn't meet its goal of inspecting all slot machines annually, that gaming facilities are not assessed individually for risk and that patrons aren't provided with information on the maximum prize payout, which would help in case of machine malfunction.

I talked about the warning labels on liquor and tobacco. If the McGuinty government was really serious about protecting people from the deadly pitfalls of gambling, why isn't there a sign on the machine at the corner store that says, "You are going to lose money when you buy a lottery ticket." Why isn't there a sign above that Lotto 6/49 screen saying, "Mr. McGuinty is picking your pocket again, and you shouldn't be suckered by him anymore." Why are there not signs above the slot machines at the casinos saying, "Kiss that toonie goodbye, because you'll never see it again." Why aren't those signs there?

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Why aren't those signs there?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. Peter Kormos: We've got a serious problem with gambling addiction here in the province of Ontario, but the real gambling addict is Premier McGuinty. We've learned from the fiasco at Ontario Lottery and Gaming that that operation isn't as shipshape as it could be either. I've had occasion to say before, and I'll say again, that people should watch when they gamble with the province of Ontario. You're safer betting with Tony Soprano.

What does the Auditor General say about government advertising? The Ministry of Revenue ran ads on tax changes before the review was even completed by the auditor's office. This government bragged about legislation it introduced that was going to have the auditor review advertising like that to determine whether or not it was partisan. But it appears that this "good government," I say very sarcastically, couldn't care less what the auditor thought about their tax changes, whether or not the ad about tax changes violated the Government Advertising Act. We just saw—and I know the member for Simcoe—Grey has been on his feet about it—the advertising blitz around the HST and electricity.

One wonders what the Ministry of Consumer Affairs is doing when it comes to consumer protection, because surely we have controls on fraudulent advertising in the province of Ontario, don't we? To distribute a leaflet telling folks that somebody is going to cut their electricity rates by 10% without telling them they're also going to increase them by 46% over the next five years is misleading advertising. I always figured that that's what consumer protection laws were for: to protect people against misleading advertising, because that's fraud.

I'm trying to prioritize here, because I haven't got that much time left. I think I'm going to go with organ donation. Organ donation has been an issue in this Legislature for a good chunk of time. I know that the member for Newmarket—Aurora has been passionate about it, and I know that the member for Brant has been passionate about it. They have had their own private member's bills. I've been a very strong believer in the presumed consent approach, as compared to the presumed denial, which is the style of organ donation process that we have now.

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But the Auditor General told us today that although there are 61 hospitals that have the capability to be part of the Trillium Gift of Life Network, only 21 are currently participating in this program. What gives? What's the story here? How is it that we have these huge waiting lists of people who need organs? You have 61 hospitals that have the capability to be part of the Trillium Gift of Life Network—that's salvaging, retrieving organs and then taking them to where they've got to go—yet only 21 are participating in the program. In other words, shocking.

In 40% of the cases reviewed, organs were not allocated to the highest-needs patients. Hmm, you would think that there would be prioritization so that the patient

with the highest need—in other words, the one closest to death—would be getting the organ when there's but one organ available. The Auditor General notes that there is a lack of consistent best practices and monitoring of the network's activities.

Of course, the other problems—and this is one that comes up frequently—are the old health cards, that less than 1% of people with these cards have signed up to be a donor, as compared to 27% of Ontarians with new health cards, and the absence of an online registry. The member for Newmarket raised this in question period earlier today. That card really doesn't mean very much, as is pointed out by the Auditor General. Personal effects of patients are rarely rummaged through to look for something like an organ donor card, even if part of your health card. That's why there are a whole lot of Ontarians, including the member for Parkdale—High Park, who have become enthusiastic about this whole notion of presumed consent, like most of the civilized world.

We have a system now called presumed denial. In other words, it's presumed that you want to be a selfish, miserable, miserly person and not have your organs used to save somebody else's life in the event that you die. I don't think that accurately reflects the perspective of most Ontarians. The organs are of no use to you whatsoever once you're dead—no use whatsoever, Ms. Smith. All they are is dead weight for the pallbearers.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, they are. Geez, I keep telling—and I've got to get it done some day, but I'm going to have a dotted line tattooed up my belly that says, "Upon death, open here."

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Okay, that's too much information.

Mr. Peter Kormos: We've got to change—I'll refer you to my tattoo artist. Although who knows, Ms. Wynne may already have a tattoo.

In any event, I really believe that most Ontarians expect their organs to be used, so why don't we have a presumed consent system? If somebody really, really doesn't want their organs to be used to save a life—for reasons that I can't even begin to imagine—let them say, "No." As a matter of fact, give them a bumper sticker so they can say, "I don't want my organs used after I'm dead and no longer have any use for them." But the lack of the registry is a real problem, and this government has been delinquent and negligent in terms of moving on it.

There, I have managed to spend an hour talking about the title of the bill. I suppose I haven't talked to my colleagues about—we were concerned because the community around French-as-a-second-language education was concerned about schedule 3 of the bill, the amendments to the Education Act. Both the New Democrats and the Conservatives voted against schedule 3 in a recorded vote in committee, but the Liberal majority used its heft to retain schedule 3.

I haven't had the most recent talk with my colleagues about whether we're going to support this bill or not. I suspect we will—because at the end of the day it's really

not much; it's nothing to write home about—but there's nothing in there that makes this government good or even makes it better. This government may well have passed the point where it's redeemable. This government may have reached the Edsel stage in terms of branding such that no matter what it does—and it doesn't happen to seem to do anything particularly well anymore, if it ever did.

Its poverty agenda is impoverished and appalling. The recent publication by ISARC that was released, I believe, at a public event on Thursday night—I saw a copy of it on Wednesday when the people from ISARC had their press conference here—noted that this government has not rolled back the Harris download. Certainly this government has not addressed poverty in any meaningful dollar-and-cent way; it certainly hasn't when it comes to affordable housing. We learned that too just a little while ago, didn't we? The member for Parkdale—High Park, spoke about it: 142,000 on waiting lists for affordable housing; legislation brought by this government that doesn't invest a single new penny in affordable housing of any type; and waiting lists that were just huge.

I know that in the communities I represent that issue comes up with all kinds of families, and you've got different kinds of problems depending upon the kind of family. When you've got a family with kids, they need housing that accommodates kids in a safe and dignified way. When you need seniors' housing, you need housing that accommodates seniors, usually smaller apartments, but ideally apartments that have the support of other seniors in the same building, as part of a community. We have a location, 211 King Street in Welland, that's effectively a seniors' building—a huge waiting list. In terms of public housing, again, smaller-town Ontario is probably far worse off than big-city Ontario, but then big-city Ontario has so much larger populations by its very nature.

Good government is not to be found here at Queen's Park. This government has a few other failings as well. If Diogenes were in here with his lamp, walking past the government benches, he'd spend an awful long time in here and still walk out empty-handed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: The member for Welland has never had a problem speaking for about an hour on any topic. The only thing we didn't hear at the end of his one-hour presentation was that he still doesn't know if they are going to support Bill 110 or not. He did say that the bill is perhaps innocuous, so they may be considering supporting it. I hope that, indeed, they will support it.

The last time I checked, we had some 26 or 28 ministries. I think it's part of the responsibility of the government that from time to time the government sees that the various laws and legislation that we introduce and amend and pass on a daily basis in this House here do improve the way we deliver our services to the people in Ontario—

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me, can you stop the clock for a second. I hear somebody's BlackBerry; I'm sure I'm not the only person who's hearing it. Could you please check and make sure that it's not yours? Thank you.

Member for York West, continue.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Thank you. I only have two minutes, and it's a welcome interference.

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Let me add to the comments of the member from Welland that the bill, as it is, has got many technical points. It is aimed at clarifying and simplifying. It amends, it improves, it streamlines much of the legislation that, on a daily basis and on a regular basis, delivers services to the people of Ontario.

When we say, "delivering services to the people of Ontario," people may expect or some members may expect that this is directly from the Premier or this government. As I said before, we have some 28 ministries with hundreds of thousands of employees. It is the direction that we give to them as to how to deliver the services that the government of Ontario, through the legislation, proposes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's very timely that the member from Welland raised what ends up being quite a damning indictment of our debate today, to promote good government, when the Auditor General, this afternoon of course, released a very substantial report that raises many concerns over 11 different agencies and ministries on what, in fact, is not at all good government. He raised—and I'm pleased that he was talking about it—out of the community and social services ministry, the problems that people are experiencing with the Family Responsibility Office.

What jumped out at me as I was reviewing the auditor's report from today is that nearly 20,000 individuals who have their support orders enforced by the office—or more accurately, don't have them enforced by the office—also collect social assistance, often because their former partners fail to pay spousal and child support. So we have an indication here: If we actually had some good government and the FRO, the Family Responsibility Office, was doing their job and enforcing the payments that have been justifiably set out by court order, then you would have upwards of 20,000 individuals not having to rely on government support through other means. I'm pleased that the member for Welland raised this issue and raised the Auditor General's report in his comments.

It sort of reinforces to me the problems that we have when the spin doctors behind the magic curtain name acts "to promote good government." The Auditor General doesn't have to have a fancy name for his annual report. He simply has to show the facts.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I was able to listen to all of the comments of my colleague, but what I found most telling were his references to today's 2010 annual report of the Auditor General of Ontario. One would think, after seven years in government, that a government that boasts about providing good government would have actually done something about the sorry things that are happening at the Family Responsibility Office.

I was here earlier when a government spokesperson was giving a speech remembering those women who were killed at the massacre in Montreal in 1989, but I'm struck by this: When you read the Auditor General's report, who are the vast majority of people who are living in poverty as a result of the screw-ups at the Family Responsibility Office? Women; women and their children.

One would have thought that, after all the boasting of this government, the Auditor General would be able to make a positive review of home care services, but his comments on the state of home care under this government are almost as critical as his comments on the fiascos at the Family Responsibility Office.

Then there are the hospital emergency departments and the discharge of hospital patients. Again, he points out that there is no evidence of good government.

Then, as my colleague referred to, casino gaming regulation: All you have to do is look at the Auditor General's comments and the conclusion one comes away with is that this is a government, a McGuinty government, that is more interested in how much money they can take from people than providing good government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I have a duty and responsibility, of course, to rise in support of the Good Government Act.

As many of my colleagues here in the House have noted, it is a housekeeping measure. There are something on the order of 70 amendments, dealing with more than half a dozen ministries, essentially to clean up some of the language, improve clarity and perhaps reinforce not only the spirit but also the letter of the law.

If I might just use this opportunity to speak directly to some of my own constituents in the great riding of Etobicoke North: We've received a number of calls with regard to the unfolding measures on the hydro tax credit rebate that we'll be offering, and I think people are enthused. There is, of course, a little bit of information that still needs to be transferred to them, but as I understand it, our projection is that, on an annual basis, hydro rates are going to be increasing something on the order of perhaps 3.3% to 3.5%. On top of that, the government of Ontario, because we know this is a time of challenge for many families, will be reducing the hydro bill by approximately 10%. That 10% will actually reach families in May, although it will start to count on a monthly basis as of January. We're instituting that for the next five years, which I think is a remarkable initiative and measure. We've heard our constituents; we're out there.

I may just add very briefly, in the closing seconds, that part of it is, of course, the Clean Energy Act. As a doctor, I can tell you that for us to clean up our atmosphere and have fewer hospital admissions due to asthma, chronic obstructive lung disease, smog days or provocations of allergy, and of course the whole burden, both economic as well as human suffering, that that leads to, is something that I'm actually proud to be part of, not only as a physician but also as a parliamentarian and, I would even say, in a personal capacity.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Welland has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I suppose I should express gratitude to the people in the brain trust who designed the title of the bill: An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It was good to us.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It was a gift. Let's see, how about this: "An Act to promote smart government by amending or repealing certain acts"? That will give us more grist.

Interjection: That's next year.

Mr. Peter Kormos: He notes.

How about "An Act to promote understanding government and caring government"? That will give us another—because we get caught up on the titles. I've never seen an instance where so much debate has focused on a bill's title, as we have with this one. And it's—

Mr. Howard Hampton: An empty title.

Mr. Peter Kormos: He notes.

These are gifts. They're delightful. It's as if it was my birthday, Christmas, Hanukkah and everything all rolled together all at once, and I express my gratitude.

But when I go to the riding on weekends, people aren't telling me about good government at Queen's Park. People are telling me about HST. People are telling me about HST on their electricity bills. People are telling me about not-so-smart, dumb-and-dumber, stupid meters that are jacking up their electricity prices.

Mr. Howard Hampton: At \$1.5 billion.

Mr. Peter Kormos: People are telling me that they resent being dinged over \$1.5 billion to pay for not-so-smart, dumb-and-dumber, stupid meters. They find it even stupider that empty houses in Windsor that were slated for demolition had these same meters installed in them, even though the houses were empty and were about to be done in by the wrecker's ball.

So it's not good government; it's not smart government. It's none of the above.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity this afternoon to participate in this debate on Bill 110, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts. I understand that the bill is before the House now at third reading.

I want to follow up on the member who just spoke, when he thanked those who drafted the bill, in terms of the title, because it gave the opposition something to chew on. The fact is, by calling this government a good

government, or by calling this bill An Act to promote good government, certainly gives us on the opposition side of the House lots and lots to talk about.

Today, as a matter of fact, of course, as has already been pointed out by a couple of the members, the Auditor General has released his 2010 annual report. It's a huge document, about 446 pages. I just received mine this afternoon at 1 o'clock, and I look forward to reviewing it tonight after the Legislature rises.

1530

Unfortunately, for I guess the third year now, this government, or this current mandate rather, but going back to probably 2003—it continues to tell the story of the McGuinty government's unfortunate disregard for taxpayers' money. Page after page of problems have been identified by the Auditor General that need to be addressed by the government.

I would hope that the government would be responding in the appropriate way, to take these issues and the advice of the Auditor General and commit to implementing his recommendations. If you look at the areas that were covered, the Auditor General this year looked at the casino gaming regulations, the discharge of hospital patients, the Family Responsibility Office, home care services, hospital emergency departments, infrastructure asset management at colleges, infrastructure stimulus spending, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., non-hazardous waste disposal and diversion, organ and tissue donation and transplantation, and school safety. Then there is a big section on the value-for-money audits that were pursued by the Auditor General and his staff. Again, I think it's important that the government recognize that it has an obligation to review those recommendations and commit to doing better.

Bill 110, as we know, is really an omnibus bill that was brought forward in the House by the Attorney General on October 5, 2010, and it opens a significant number of acts under the Ministry of the Attorney General, and of the Ministry of Consumer Services. If we look at the Ministry of the Attorney General, it opens the Justices of the Peace Act, the Provincial Offences Act, the Wine Content and Labelling Act.

In terms of the Ministry of Consumer Services: the Business Corporations Act, the Collection Agencies Act, the Debt Collectors Act, the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services Act, the Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, the Payday Loans Act, the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act and the Travel Industry Act.

Under the Ministry of Education, it opens up the Education Act with changes and the Essex County French-language Secondary School Act.

Under the Ministry of Energy, it opens up the Ontario Energy Board Act.

Under the Ministry of Government Services: the Business Corporations Act, the Business Names Act, the Corporations Information Act, the Extra-Provincial Corporations Act, the Licence Appeal Tribunal Act, the Limited Partnerships Act and the Vital Statistics Act.

Then, looking at the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, it makes changes to the Community Care Access Corporations Act, the Home Care and Community Services Act, the Laboratory and Specimen Collection Centre Licensing Act, the Ontario Mental Health Foundation Act, the Physician Services Delivery Management Act and various other acts.

Under schedule 7, the Ministry of Labour, it opens up the Employment Standards Act, the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

It is obviously a significant omnibus bill, but as I said earlier, and I think as a number of members have said, the difficulty that most of us have is the government using these many housekeeping provisions to suggest that they are actually providing good government for the people of Ontario.

I have a number of very serious concerns in response to the statement that the government is providing good government for the people of Ontario. I would first point out the out-of-control government spending, some of which I'm sure is reflected in the auditor's report, but the overall increase in spending since this government took power in 2003.

According to published reports, it appears that the spending has gone up on an average basis 7% per year. During most of those years, I suspect inflation was around 2%, 3% at most. So we have seen real increases of at least 4% to 5% per year since this government took office. And as we know, it has established spending patterns that are completely unsustainable and completely unaffordable for the taxpayer of Ontario. As a result of the downturn in the economy and the recession that we have hopefully emerged out of now, we are now experiencing a massive deficit in the many billions of dollars. It's somewhat of a moving target because the government has put out specific projected deficit numbers to try to confuse people, and of course, those numbers change.

But the fact remains that the province of Ontario is currently borrowing more than \$2 million an hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. That should be a troubling concern for all of us. I think that all of us as members of the provincial Legislature would hope to leave succeeding generations, future generations, our children and our grandchildren, a better province than we have today. If we are unable or unwilling to accept responsibility for the financial situation that the province faces such that we make the tough decisions that are going to have to be made to work towards a balanced budget so that we are not borrowing so much money on an annual basis, then we will leave the next generation with an unconscionable debt problem that they may never be able to get out of, and without question we will leave the next generation worse off than our generation has been privileged to enjoy.

We also know that if the current spending patterns hold, by 2013, the McGuinty Liberal government will have doubled the provincial debt from the time it took office—over about a 10-year period doubling the debt.

We also know that currently we spend \$10 billion annually on debt servicing. That's more than many of the budgets of entire ministries. And you think, if we didn't spend \$10 billion a year on interest, where could that money go? Could that go to new hospital construction? Could that go to new road construction? Could that go towards many of the infrastructure needs that our communities continue to have, in spite of whatever efforts the government has put forward in recent years? Could that money go to tax relief for the people of Ontario? You think of all of those other alternative policies that could be pursued if indeed the government wasn't spending \$10 billion per year on interest.

I also want to point out once again that the government is obligated to bring forward a balanced budget plan when it runs a deficit, according to the laws of the province of Ontario, and release that with its annual budget. When it released its budget earlier this year, in March, included in the budget papers was a so-called balanced budget plan where the government claimed to plan to balance the budget by, I believe, 2018. Unfortunately, included in the fine print in the budget papers document was a statement that the only way this can be accomplished and achieved is if the government holds its operating expenditures to below 2% a year; 1.9% is, I believe, the number that's in the budget papers. We know that in the past, the government, as I said earlier, has increased spending on average during its term of office by 7% a year. So you wonder, how can this government possibly hold the line on spending such that it holds spending increases to lessen the rate of inflation, and what would that mean? How would this government, with its propensity to spend money like there's no tomorrow, ever acquire the discipline that would be necessary to hold their spending increases to the rate of inflation?

That question has been raised many times in the Legislature by my colleague the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, who is our party's finance critic, and a number of us continue to raise it. The government was very fortunate that, by and large, the press, on the day of the budget, in the immediate aftermath, reported the government's statement that they planned to balance the budget by 2018 as if it was factual. Unfortunately, it's actually fantasy, not fact, and we will continue to point out that particular issue.

I had an interesting meeting on Friday in my constituency office with members of the Christian Farmers of Wellington county. We had a very interesting and informative meeting. They gave me a number of documents to peruse, and I looked at them over the weekend. I just want to continue to push on their behalf this afternoon to remind the government of the need for risk management programming that works for farmers. We need to ensure that we support our beef producers, our hog producers and our horticulture growers. At the same time, I realize that there are calls upon the federal government to participate, and I would add my voice to those calls, because I think that when farmers are in trouble, all

governments should work together across party lines. Members of the Legislature should work together, across party lines, towards solutions. This government has to recognize that farmers feed cities, and where we can help farm families, we need to step forward when there is a need.

Farmers in my riding continue to tell me about the need for support based on rising input costs and the continued expansion of government regulation, which are causing them difficulty. I would recommend to the government members to look at what the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario are advocating, as well as the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

1540

Shortly, we're going to be engaging in yet another year of pre-budget public hearings through the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, and all of the organizations that have an interest in provincial government policy, hopefully, will have the opportunity to come forward and express their views. Those hearings are very important, and I would hope that the government will monitor them very closely and carefully and endeavour to bring forward policies in the upcoming provincial budget that are reflective of what they hear during the course of those hearings.

Again, I would encourage them to listen to the general farm organizations, as well as the commodity groups—and not just to listen, but to follow up, to support the minister. I hear the Minister of Agriculture is endeavouring to speak on behalf of farm families within the government caucus and within the cabinet, and I hear that, in many cases, she's not being supported by her colleagues. There's a lack of recognition on the part of many of the members on the opposite side. They don't seem to understand the severity of the issue and the importance of immediate action.

I would say again that I believe the federal government needs to participate in the solution. Certainly that has always been my commitment and my statement, that we need to ensure that governments at all levels work together towards solutions when it comes to a crisis in agriculture.

In my own riding of Wellington–Halton Hills that I'm so privileged to represent, we have been asking for years for improvements to Highway 6 south of Guelph, the Morriston bypass, as it's known. This is a project that has been talked about literally for a generation. Some of the locals have told me that it has been a subject of discussion in the local area for some 30 years. In my role and responsibility as the MPP for Wellington–Halton Hills, I will continue to advocate to get this project on the five-year plan so as to ensure that highway safety and improved traffic efficiency is something that we can expect and look forward to.

I'm pleased that the Minister of Transportation is in the House today, and I'm glad she took note of what I said. I note that the member from Guelph is here, and I know she's interested in this issue as the former parliamentary assistant. I'm glad she has taken note. Both of

these members are well aware of the importance of this project.

There are a number of newly elected members of Puslinch township council who I know want me to continue to advocate for this, as the former councillors did. I know that there will be upcoming opportunities for meetings. I anticipate and expect that the Minister of Transportation will be at the ROMA-Good Roads Conference in February, most likely, as the minister normally is. I would hope that if a meeting request comes in from the township of Puslinch and other municipalities in Wellington-Halton Hills, she would set aside some time to listen to their concerns. But I'm quite sure there will be a request for the meeting with the minister coming forward from the township of Puslinch council. Certainly the need has been well documented, the work has been done, and the community is ready to move forward.

I would be remiss if I did not also again talk about the health care needs in our riding, the hospital projects that I've talked about so many times during the course of this fall sitting and going back years—actually going back seven years, since this government was elected. It was just before the change of government that I was first informed that the Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Fergus had an ambitious redevelopment plan, and as that plan has evolved, I've continued to bring it forward in this House to try to nudge it along. There's no one in our community who expects that a new hospital will be built next year, but everyone in our community that I've talked to, or the vast majority, believes that we should be allowed to move forward with the planning. We know there's a multi-stage planning process and there have been a number of twists and turns along the way, but the fact is that our community has raised \$15 million in pledges and contributions, cash in the bank, and we should be allowed to move forward to the next stage of planning, which would allow us to go to the functional program stage. There would be a planning grant that would go with that. I think 15% of the total estimated cost of the project is what we would expect. We would hope that, in the coming months, the government would see fit to allow that to happen.

I realize the government has something like 130 hospital projects—at least 130 that the Ministry of Health knows about—and that they are in communities all across the province. I assume that there are more requests for money than there is money, but certainly we know that the government is expected to be spending \$2 billion this year, as it did last year, on hospital capital projects. In Wellington-Halton Hills, all we want is our fair share. So again I would continue to ask the Minister of Health and the government members to support this need in our community.

I'm also privileged to represent the community of Georgetown in Halton Hills. I was informed in the summertime that the hospital had an idea for a capital project as well, to accommodate the new CT scanner that has been approved for the Georgetown hospital. They were also looking to renovate the emergency department

at this hospital to make it more efficient, because it is currently seeing far more patients attending at the emergency department than it was ever built for.

Halton Hills, of course, being part of Halton region, is in an area of the province that is experiencing considerable growth. Although the town of Halton Hills is trying to ensure that the growth is moderate, growth pressures continue unabated because of the proximity of our community within the GTA as well as close to the city of Toronto.

They have, in fact, informed me that they are looking for a small capital grant, if they could receive one. Again, they're very reasonable, very understanding; they know there is a lot of demand for this kind of program within the Ministry of Health. But at the same time they need answers as to whether or not the provincial government would be prepared to fund it. They need a firm and definitive response to make their own plans and decide to what extent they're going to have to move forward based on local fundraising, and I support their efforts. Given the fact that I was informed of their needs, I certainly wanted to make sure that members of the Legislature were well aware of them. We continue to respectfully request the support of the provincial government for those projects.

I must return to the Auditor General's report, because I think that is the issue of the day, and I would hope that government members will be giving careful review and serious consideration to the various recommendations, because many of these recommendations are very, very important to the people of Ontario.

I look at chapter 3, the Family Responsibility Office. For some time, complaints and concerns about the Family Responsibility Office have probably been the most significant concern in my constituency office, in terms of people calling with a problem with government: not getting an answer, mix-ups with funding. And it's not just the people dependent on receiving the funding. Sometimes it's those who have support obligations and are supporting their family through the Family Responsibility Office.

I would say that obviously there are many, many thousands of real families out here who are dependent on the government to do this job effectively, to ensure they have enough money coming in on a monthly basis to pay their hydro bills, their HST, their property taxes, their grocery bills—all these day-to-day things.

Of course, where there has been a family breakup and there's a single mother trying to raise children on her own, and in some cases, perhaps, a father trying to raise their children—he may have custody—obviously money is tight, budgets are tight and household budgets are challenged and stretched. So, to the extent that the provincial government can do a good job with the Family Responsibility Office and ensure that families are supported the way they should be, the way the courts have ordered and the way that obligations have been determined, that is certainly in the public interest. If the Family Responsibility Office is not being administered the way it should be, all of us should be seriously concerned.

That's just one example, but if you look at the other recommendations in the report, obviously the discharge of hospital patients is very important to the health care system. Going on to home care services, all of us should recognize their importance: to ensure that the health care system is being managed properly in the best interests of the people of Ontario.

My time is winding down, Madam Speaker, but I want to thank you very much for listening to my comments this afternoon. I really do appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I've had the advantage, now, of listening to a couple of speakers this afternoon. I want to just make a few comments regarding the speech of my colleague from the Conservative Party. One is this: I think there is a certain irony today, one that perhaps government members don't enjoy, that at the same time they want to talk about their so-called good government, the Auditor General produces his report, which goes on, page after page, chapter after chapter, about how little good government is being provided by this particular government.

1550

As my honourable colleague has pointed out, the Auditor General starts with the fiasco of casino gaming regulation; discharge of hospital patients while they are still ill; the problems with home care; and hospital emergency departments, the overloading and the long waits, the unbelievable waits. The fact is that infrastructure money is being spent by this government with really, in some cases, no consideration of the merit of the project. Just shovel the money out the door as quickly as you can.

An example of that, of course, is the not-so-smart meters. So far, people in Ontario are paying about \$1.5 billion for the not-so-smart meters, and people who work in the electricity system tell us that they don't work very well. Indeed, as the temperature heads toward 10 below, we find that they don't work at all at temperatures below 30 below. Is that an example of good government?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I've noticed that we've started to stray a little bit from what actually the bill is all about, which is a whole series of housekeeping amendments that amend various acts to bring them up to date. So in that spirit, and of course being as how it's close to Christmastime, let me add a few thoughts of my own to that.

My home was the very first one in the neighbourhood of Churchill Meadows to have a smart meter installed. Long before our utility—in fact, it still isn't billing on time of use, but we were actually able, at our home, to watch our energy consumption patterns and to think to ourselves, "Whenever this does begin, what are the things that we can do that are actually going to make a difference to us?"

At our home, we figured, "What are the real consumers of electricity?" Well, there's our refrigerator, and

there's not a whole lot we can do about that, except that neither of us are at home during the day so it doesn't really make a big draw during the day.

What are the ones that really consume energy? Well, there's your dishwasher. I showed my lovely other half, Andrea, just where you can find the button that you can hit to delay it for two hours. So we go to bed and at about 12 midnight, it starts up and all the dishes are clean in the morning.

You have the same option on your dryer. You can put a load of clothes in at 7 or 8 o'clock. You can put them in the dryer and you can make all of your settings, and you can set it for delay.

With the lowest-price period starting now at 7 o'clock rather than 9 o'clock, for most people this means that whenever you're finished dinner, you're now on the cheapest electricity that there is. What it has done for us is that it has taught us how we use energy, and it has shown us how we can change our consumption pattern.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate the opportunity to speak about Bill 110 and comment on the comments of the member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

He spoke about a number of issues, whether it's Highway 6, the Morriston bypass; or the spending habits of the current government and how they relate to good government—or the lack thereof, I guess, in the comments—where over \$2 million was being spent each and every hour, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

He also spoke about health care needs in his riding, how a hospital was needed and how there was limited availability for that.

The member also spoke about the Auditor General's report and how, in relation to good government, this may or may not play out in the best interests of the public at large. When you look at the Auditor General's report, you see that 50%, or a little bit over 50%, of the reports that have come out, that the auditor had to review, effectively deal with health care and/or education.

There was a private member's bill that came forward before that established a new committee that essentially tried to account for just those two specific areas, health care and education. When effectively over 64.8% of the provincial budget goes towards health care and education, certainly I would think that we would need a committee that focuses solely on health care and education so that we can get regular updates in this House.

Realistically, all governments try to do the best that they can in various aspects and everybody has a different perspective, but the auditor, in his great work, comes forward and reviews a lot of these. This would be an opportunity for that as well.

Also, the member spoke about the paying of HST and the impact on energy bills, and how single mothers may have difficulty with a lot of those aspects. Quite frankly, there needs to be a lot of adjustment done towards that issue, particularly in areas like mine, where individuals who are on salary or get laid off become defiant or

delinquent in their payments because they don't have funds coming in.

These are all small sorts of things that will make good government and move forward. When we have such a wide range, we need to look at many of them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Apparently, the members on the government side not only don't want to speak, they don't even want to make comments on the speech by my colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills. Well, I know there was one member, but I guess the rest of them have drifted off early for the Christmas recess.

Or perhaps they really are actually ashamed. They are ashamed of the bill and the audacity, but also, I might say, as the member for Welland says, the creativity of the Liberal spin doctors who came up with the name for this bill, calling it "good government." It's kind of the oxymoron of all oxymorons, when they're going to call a bill after good government, knowing that for seven years they have delivered the exact opposite. For the last seven years, people have been yearning for good government in the province of Ontario, because that's actually why they elected Dalton McGuinty and his party. You see, they promised the people in Ontario that that's exactly what they would deliver: good government.

When we look at this bill, it's kind of shallow and kind of hollow. There's not much there. A lot of pages; a lot of ink. They've used a lot of ink, but it's not really doing a whole lot to help the people in the province of Ontario who are suffering so much.

As my colleague from Halton Hills has indicated, when you travel across this province, everywhere you go there are stories of difficulty, and it's not difficulty brought on by the individual themselves, it's difficulty that has been brought on by the policies of this government. We could talk about energy, and I'm not going to be able to get into it because I'm going to run out of time, but there will be another time. But this bill is a bit of a farce.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Wellington–Halton Hills has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to thank the member for Kenora–Rainy River, the member for Mississauga–Streetsville, the member for Oshawa and the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, all of whom commented on my remarks.

I also, as I said earlier, want to continue to focus on the Auditor General's report. I would commend the reading of it to all members of the Legislature. I would hope that everyone will take the opportunity, this evening and over the next few days, to look at it, because I think it is certainly important that this Legislature discharges, really, its most important function, which is to carefully monitor the expenditures in the ministries. That is one where I think we've, to some degree as a Legislature, and perhaps it's the case across Canada with other Legislatures—I'm not sure; maybe the House of Commons.

But the fact is, one of our most important responsibilities is to carefully monitor the expenditures of ministries, and I think that we need to collectively do a better job of it.

Certainly, I know that the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills, who chairs the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, understands the importance of that even though he accused me of putting the government members to sleep with my remarks earlier in the afternoon. I do want to compliment him on the outstanding work that he does as the chairman of the public accounts committee. For approximately a year, I had the opportunity to serve with him. He does his job in a non-partisan fashion. I think that every member of the public accounts committee over the course of the last number of years would certainly confirm that. The committee works together in a relatively non-partisan fashion to do its job and to do its responsibility.

The member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills has been here for 33 years. He is a pillar of this Legislature and I certainly wish him well in all of his future endeavours. I enjoy working with him, I admire him a great deal, and I want to congratulate him for the work that he does in this Legislature, and again to suggest to all members of this House how important it is that we review the auditor's report, that we take those comments and concerns seriously and that we work together to ensure the expenditure of taxpayers' money is done in a better way in the future.

1600

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm pleased to be able to participate in this debate today. As I said in my comments a few minutes ago, there is a certain irony about this bill being debated on this day and the auditor bringing down his 2010 annual report. The title of this bill—or shall I say the mistitle of this bill?—is An Act to promote good government. The auditor's report could easily have the title "The failure to provide good government." That is one of the ironies of today.

The other irony we note is that government members, perhaps because they're embarrassed, don't want to stand and speak about this bill. There's been an hour of speech from my colleague Mr. Kormos from the NDP and then a speech by one of my colleagues from the Conservative caucus, yet we've failed to hear from any member of the government on this issue. There's always a certain irony when the government puts forward a bill they call good government, and yet government members refuse to get on their feet to speak about the bill. As I say, I think I know why.

The auditor's report provides us chapter and verse of what is going on here, so I want to refer at length to the auditor's report, because it is, after all, 447 pages of critique and description of how this government is failing to provide good government.

There's probably no better place to start than with the Family Responsibility Office. The reason that the Family Responsibility Office is a good place to start is because

the Auditor General examined what was happening at the Family Responsibility Office in 2003, when this government assumed office. In his report in 2003, the auditor identified serious problems at the Family Responsibility Office. Now he comes back after seven years of the McGuinty government and he looks at it again, and his conclusions are oh, so telling.

He says, first of all, that the problems that he identified in 2003, when the McGuinty Liberals became the government of Ontario, continue to exist today. In fact, there's much evidence that the problem has grown worse.

Let me give you some examples. About \$1.6 billion of payments that should be made, mostly to women and children living in poverty, are not being made. When those women contact the Family Responsibility Office to say to them, "What are we to do?" only one in four of those cases is acted upon in each year. Imagine, only one in four—and these are women and children in dire need. For many, if the support payment doesn't arrive, you can't pay the hydro bill; you can't pay the heating bill; you can't pay the rent; you can't put food on the table; you can't ensure that the kids have clothes to go to school in. But under this government, only one in four of those calls is responded to, as the Auditor General has found. Indeed, over 80% of the calls that are made by people never get through to the government's call centre. Imagine being in that kind of need: one day, two days, three days away from not being able to pay the bill. You're told to call the government's 1-800 number, and 80% of the calls don't get through.

There are 91,000 action memos outstanding, the Auditor General found. Let's just think about that: 91,000 cases where nothing's happening.

The Auditor General finds that \$21 million has been spent on a new information technology system, and in his words, it has been wasted—\$21 million out the door; there's nothing to show for it, while women and children who are in dire need face evermore difficult circumstances.

The Auditor General calls for more aggressive enforcement; better case management; yes, improved information technology, after a \$21-million failure; and the need to communicate with those people who need these services. This is after seven years—seven years, and the situation has not gotten better; it has gotten worse.

Over 100,000 Ontario families, mainly sole-support women and their children, are waiting for support payments and being forced to survive without the billions of dollars they are owed and have a right to receive. And, as the Auditor General reports, everyone in the province is being forced to pay for this government's failure because over 20,000 of these families have been forced on to social assistance because of this failure. I don't think a clearer comparison could be attained anywhere else.

The Auditor General reviewed this organization in 2003 when the McGuinty Liberals assumed office, and here he is in 2010 saying, "It hasn't gotten any better; it has gotten worse." These are amongst the most vulnerable women and children in this province. As he points

out, 100,000 Ontario families are waiting for support payments, and 20,000 of those families have been forced to social assistance because of this government's failure to provide good government.

But the Auditor General does not rest there. He goes on to look at the discharge of hospital patients, and let me tell you, this is an important issue virtually everywhere in Ontario. He points out that 50,000 Ontario patients were waiting in hospital in 2009 to be discharged because of delays in arranging post-discharge health care: problems with communicating discharge plans to family and caregivers; failures of the community care access centres; improper management of post-discharge care, like medication management plans; and lack of oversight to ensure that the needs of patients are met. I think most people would find that absolutely astounding. Yet, as the Auditor General points out, this is an issue that is not being resolved; it's a serious issue that seems to be growing more serious.

He goes on: hospital emergency departments. Since April 2008, emergency room wait times have not significantly improved or met so-called provincial targets. What are the problems? One of the problems is about ensuring adequate nursing staff in emergency rooms, and he points out huge costs because of overtime pay that has to be paid because of the inadequate nursing supply. He points out that lower-acuity patients make up about 30% of emergency room visits and could and should be treated elsewhere.

I suspect that I, like other MPPs, have some insight into this because I hear from people all the time who say, "I would like to be able to go to the family doctor, I would like to be able to go to the clinic, but I'm told I have to wait three months to get an appointment." Imagine being ill today and being told, "Well, if you want an appointment with the nurse practitioner or your family physician, I'm sorry, the best we can do is three months from now." So what happens? Those people go to the emergency room. It's their only option in many cases.

1610

This is not, by any definition, good government. This is not, by any definition, an example of what a good government would do.

The Auditor General goes on and says that this government's much-boasted about pay-for-results program has been a failure. As he points out, the hospital that received the most money from this government's boasted-of pay-for-results program in year two hasn't shown any positive results. He points out that there are huge problems with inconsistent clinical practice; huge problems with coordination between departments; and little coordination between ambulances, emergency response systems and the emergency room. The government has been asked many times to streamline the system, but nothing has been done since 2003.

Again, how could any government boast about good government when these kinds of situations are happening?

Then, there is the very serious issue of home care services. Some community care access centres have patients waiting on lists for care for as long as 262 days. Imagine you're discharged from the hospital, your physician says you need home care and you're told, "Well, you have to wait for 262 days." Some patients are waiting as long as 15 months for an assessment—15 months. Home care services are still not being provided based on need. In many cases, they're based upon something called historical allocation—huge inconsistencies across the province and a lack of service guidelines.

Again, how could any government come to the Legislature today and boast about good government and boast about a bill called "An Act to promote good government" when these are the kind of things that the Auditor General notes in his report?

Then, there is the issue of organ donation. We've heard a lot about organ donation in the news lately. We've heard a lot because there are many people who need the donation of an organ—a heart, a liver, a lung—if they are to continue to be able to live. We know that there are many who want or are willing to donate their organs should something unfortunate happen to them, but what the Auditor General notes is that this government has completely dropped the ball. He reports there are 61 hospitals that have the capability to be part of the Trillium Gift of Life Network—in other words, the capability to help with organ donor challenges. However, while there are 61 that have the capability, only 21 are currently participating in the Trillium Gift of Life Network. The Auditor General reports that in over 40% of the cases reviewed, organs were not allocated to the highest-needs patients. Imagine that.

The science, the medicine, tells us who the highest-needs patients are, but this government seemingly, while it boasts that it spends billions, can't organize the system so that that precious organ, whether it be a heart, a lung, a liver, can go to the patient who all the evidence says needs it the most.

There are problems with old health cards, and that less than 1% of the people with those cards have signed up to be a donor, as opposed to the 27% of Ontarians with new health cards who have signed up to be a donor.

This is not rocket science. These are practical, specific, concrete things that could be done to improve the situation, that could be done to provide good government. But what does the Auditor General point out? It's simply not being done; it's not happening.

The Auditor General goes on and points out that there are huge variations in the wait-lists for organ donations, and there are huge variations in care, depending on the region. I know, as many people from northern Ontario have said, it depends on what region of Ontario you're from. What region of Ontario you're from determines, to a large degree, the quality of the health care that you may or may not receive.

The Auditor General concludes it is well known that an online registry for organ donation would vastly improve the participation of Ontarians in this important program, yet this government has made absolutely no

movement on this. I wonder if this is one of the things that's being saved for a pre-election announcement. But, as the Auditor General points out, this has been shouting out. This is something that is so obvious and so practical and concrete and specific to do, yet this government has done nothing.

The Auditor General points out that Ontario is lagging far behind other jurisdictions. In Ontario, only 17% of Ontarians over the age of 16 are registered as organ donors or potential organ donors. In the United Kingdom, this number is 30%, and in the United States, it is 37%.

These are practical, specific, concrete things that could be done, should be done, need to be done, that would be a part of good government, but it's not happening under this government—a government that has the audacity to bring a bill before the Legislature and claim that it is about providing good government.

The Auditor General then moves on to waste diversion and points out that Ontario families are doing their part to recycle and reduce. In fact, what he finds is that Ontario families want to do more. But he also finds that the corporate sector is getting off virtually scot-free—another indication of the failure of the McGuinty government's self-regulation approach with industry, and another example of a failure to provide good government.

As he says, Ontario needs clear waste diversion targets backed up with fines—not a wish list, hoping that the corporate sector might do something right, but clear targets, backed up by fines and enforcement. What is the result of that? Only one quarter of the non-hazardous waste is being diverted from landfills, way below this government's much-boasted-about target of 60% by 2008. Residential waste diversion has improved, but there's a drop in industrial waste diversion to 12%.

What are the main problems? Inadequate funding for municipal blue box programs, government failure to enforce regulations, lack of landfill capacity, and a lack of organic waste composting programs.

Once again, the Auditor General goes out of his way to point out the specific, concrete, practical things that could be done in this area to provide good government, but then also points out this is a government that's not doing any of those things.

As he says, many of these solutions would not cost a lot of money. What's involved, what's needed, is the will on the part of the government to do something about it, particularly with the corporate sector; a government that is prepared to set aggressive targets and then a government that is prepared to set aggressive targets and then a government that is prepared to enforce those aggressive targets. The failure to provide those things is another example of the failure of good government. So it's no surprise that government members don't want to get up on their feet today and talk about their act to provide good government. The Auditor General tells us there is a failure to provide good government under this particular government.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Let's talk about what good government does in western Mississauga. Seven years ago, we had some real, fundamental problems in delivering health care. Our government worked with me and my colleagues in Mississauga and Brampton, and we were able to open up the William Osler centre, a building that had some real structural problems. We got the job done. We got it opened on time; we got it opened on budget. We were able to begin work on Credit Valley's phase 2 project, which is coming to fruition ahead of schedule and under budget this winter. We were able to complete work on a major capital expansion at the Trillium Health Centre, which was completed ahead of schedule and within budget. We've been able to provide more facilities for Mississauga people, in probably the fastest-growing area of Ontario to receive health care, because of measures of good government such as our government has brought forth and which are elaborated in this particular bill.

We are hoping, in years to come, to be building an ambulatory surgery centre at Credit Valley Hospital. Indeed, the feasibility study money has been approved for this facility. This means that the some 80% of hospital surgical procedures that at the moment don't need to be done in a facility that has access to intensive care, where you really don't need a lot of pre-op or post-op, can be done in a separate facility where you walk in and have your surgery done; procedures that take some 15 to maybe 45 minutes today, that at the time when we grew up you'd be planning to stay at the hospital overnight.

This is the type of thing that good government brings to growing cities like Mississauga and Brampton, like York and Durham regions and like Toronto. That's a good reason why this bill needs the support of this House. It's a good reason to get it passed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Just to follow up on the member from Mississauga—Streetsville's comments about day surgery: There are a lot of problems in the health care sector. What I'm hearing from the clinics is that they would like to provide a lot of this service, yet the hospitals are saying the difficulty is, yes, it's a service that can be provided there, unless there are difficulties during the operation. That's where a hospital all of a sudden has to drop whatever it's doing in order to accommodate individuals who are coming in for those simple, outpatient services for those clinical aspects.

It's a large and a complicated field, and we have to hear from all sides on this. As we all know, there are three sides to every story. Quite frankly, the member from Mississauga—Streetsville spoke about one aspect: providing that service elsewhere. But when you hear the other side of the story, what are you going to do when a surgery doesn't go quite right? You don't have the facilities there, and you're not prepared for all aspects of it.

We, as individuals, have to make sure, as in the members' motto, that we listen to the other side. With that, I

look forward to more debate and to hearing about good government and the wide range of issues they talk about here.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: The member spoke about the foul-up of organ donation by this government, the failure of the McGuinty Liberal government to create a registry, the failure of the Liberal McGuinty government to create a meaningful way of giving people the choices, as they're currently required in this ridiculous presumed denial regime that the McGuinty government persists in maintaining, notwithstanding that most of the world recognizes that people want their organs to be used after they're dead and they no longer have any use for them.

One can only wonder how many people died: how many people on those lengthy waiting lists for organs died, how many children died. All of us, probably—I know I certainly have; I know you have—have worked with people in need of an organ or people on a waiting list and their families, these kids, where they carry pagers with them, beeper-style pagers, because they have to be available at a minute's notice. Every day they wake up wondering whether today's going to be the day, because every day that they wake up is one day closer to dying—not like it's one day closer to dying for you and me; it's one day measured in terms of months or even weeks. Just imagine—never mind an adult—a kid who puts that pager on, makes sure the batteries are good, because you wouldn't want to miss a page, makes sure that it's turned on, hoping, because I suppose that's all you can do. Some of these kids are incredibly brave, just inspirational. What have we done to those kids, and how many kids died in the course of the last year or two years or three years because we didn't have the registry and we didn't have a presumed consent regime?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I've heard a lot of bashing about FRO in the House this afternoon, so let me say this: I appreciate very much the work that the auditor has done and his good recommendations on how to improve the service at FRO. Let me say what we have done to take action. Every time the auditor comes up with a report, I have to say, we have taken action. We have hired 101 new staff at FRO since 2003, contrary to the Conservatives, where they cut staff by 41% when they were in power. We have increased funding at FRO by 55% since 2003; they cut funding by 30% in one year alone when they were in power.

We have introduced strict financial oversight with the time frame. We have modernized the computer system. I know that they are developing a new computer system. The AG repeated that many, many times in the past. What did the Conservatives do after the Auditor General recommended to replace the computer system twice? They did nothing. We are replacing it, but it takes time to be put in place.

We have also adopted a one-on-one case management approach with clients. We have modernized the tele-

phone system, which is an improvement. The best test is that I monitor on a monthly basis the complaints coming to your constituency offices, the MPPs' constituency offices, and they have reduced drastically in the past two years.

We will continue to improve the system.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Kenora–Rainy River—the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I was just recognizing the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, who stood up.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I just want to—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Might I stop you? We've already had our four questions and comments. I thought you were standing on a point of privilege or order. Sorry.

The member from Kenora–Rainy River has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I think we should all be thankful for the Auditor General's work, because he goes into chapter and verse about how good government is not being provided. I recited a few examples here today.

I could have dealt with the sorry situation of what's happening in terms of school safety, because the Auditor General delves into that. Or I could have also mentioned the \$500-million backlog of repairs and refurbishing of our college system. Or I could have dealt with the shocking things that are happening at MPAC, where literally hundreds of thousands of Ontarians have the experience that their property is being overassessed by MPAC, and the refusal of that government agency to do anything about it. Or I could have spoken at length about the sorry situation in terms of casino gaming regulation and the degree to which, again, some of the most vulnerable Ontarians are being taken advantage of in terms of online gaming.

I could have also addressed the review of government advertising, which again is something that the Auditor General criticizes at length.

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But I think the point here is this: that rather than patting itself on the back and bringing in a piece of empty legislation called "An Act to promote good government," this government should be doing what the Auditor General recommends. He provides practical, concrete and specific things that could be done to provide good government and that don't cost a lot of money.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me to join in the debate this afternoon about Bill 110. I think the previous speaker, the member for Kenora–Rainy River, talked about a very interesting point: the fact that today we're getting the Auditor General's report and we're sitting here in the House having a debate about good government.

I was on the general government committee for the one-day hearing, and this is the binder that I got on the day of the clause-by-clause debate. It was funny; when I opened it up in committee one thing struck me, and it was the compendium at the very front of the binder that says, "This bill proposes to amend a number of statutes in the interest of making Ontario more attractive to business while protecting the public interest." Isn't that just lovely?

When you go through this binder, it goes through the seven schedules and talks about some of the bills and some of the acts that are going to be amended. Really, for the average person to look at this bill, especially when it's named "An Act to promote good government"—I guess many would scratch their heads. I remember when I first looked at the bill in committee. I just picked one of the clauses out, and I think the member for Willowdale touched on it when he was speaking at the very start. You look at some of these sections and they're real head-scratchers.

One of the ones that came back to me, because I used to work in a constituency office for my predecessor, now Senator Runciman: I can remember every year, when the ads came out for the justice of the peace—I'm a newspaper guy, right? I worked for a newspaper for 13 years. I remember seeing these ads, and I know that they're not cheap. You look at ads in every region of the province advertising for JPs. I could run the numbers, Mr. Speaker—and welcome to the chair. You start looking at thousands of dollars, and invariably you get phone calls. You get phone calls asking for more information, what the jurisdiction is, where you are going, and then you find out that there wasn't a vacancy. You start to think, how many thousands of dollars? What was the money, the taxpayers' money, that was spent to advertise positions, supposed vacancies, that didn't exist? Closing that loophole, does that constitute good government? To me there was waste for seven years, or whenever the bill was put forward. You'd get phone calls, and you'd sit there and you'd say, "Why are we spending this money when we don't need to?" That was just one.

I guess what really took me aback was when we had the discussion at committee for the hearing that took place on November 22. We had a number of deputations from people in the restaurant business. They were restaurant owners, but there were also a number of workers. I was pretty surprised. The very first group that came to speak to us at committee, some of them did travel a long distance. Some of them were from eastern Ontario and were close to my riding. They represented members like the member for Ottawa Centre and the Minister of Community and Social Services; some of her constituents came to committee. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: There were some people from London who came and visited us that day, workers in the restaurant industry; as well, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo and also the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

There were people who came right at the very start of the committee, and they weren't necessarily owners of

businesses, although we did speak to a number of restaurateurs. These were workers who felt that they needed to come to address Bill 110 as it is related to the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario. They represented an extremely vulnerable group whose consequences, because of actions by the Alcohol and Gaming Commission, were fairly significant. They looked at and they brought forward issues of the closure of establishments by the Alcohol and Gaming Commission and the fact that many of these innocent employees were left scrambling to pay their bills, and the fear on sort of a day-to-day basis of having no job. These were hard-working taxpayers, many of whom make minimum wage, who work long hours, who work weekends, who work late nights, who were basically at the mercy of bureaucrats at the Alcohol and Gaming Commission.

It was unbelievable, some of the stories. We heard from people who would definitely have difficulty putting their children in daycare because the licensed establishments that they worked at would be closed and shut down. There was no opportunity to deal with fines. The closure would result in them basically not having any income.

We heard from students. There was one student from the University of Waterloo—I'm proud to say that that was my university, and I can remember at a young age being a dishwasher and a busboy. I told them the story that if I dropped a tray of glasses, I went from being a busboy back to dishwasher, and then I'd have to get back in the restaurant's good graces to allow me to go back on the floor.

The issue became that some of these people, some of these students who worked long hours and weekends—at minimum wage, many of them—would have no way to be able to pay their tuition because of a closure. So we looked at the fact that this Bill 110 didn't deal with the fact that by closing establishments, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission was throwing mothers, students and employees of all ages out on the street.

It was interesting. One of the people, Bill Seigfried, quoted a 2006 study by the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council that found the following statistics:

"Food and beverage services employed the youngest labour force, with 48.1% of all employees being between the ages of 15 and 24. Over 60% of those workers were part-time, and a full 28.4% of those workers were pursuing higher education while working part-time in the industry."

We heard from a lot of restaurants that day. We heard many from the city of Ottawa, very close to my riding of Leeds-Grenville, talking about the fact that this Alcohol and Gaming Commission could shut them down at any moment. There were no issues to negotiate, there was no education that was involved, but there was a lot of enforcement. When we brought those recommendations forward at committee, the government said, "Well, we'll take them under advisement. We'll sit there and we'll have a look at them at some future point down the road." Yet delegation after delegation talked about the issues. It

really gave the government an opportunity to provide good government, to take what was said to us that day in committee and apply it to make the act better, to address the issues of those restaurant owners, to address the issues of those vulnerable workers. But the government made no effort at committee to take those deputations and put them in print. It was a sad thing that day. I really couldn't believe it.

If you look at the name of the Good Government Act, it's far from being good government and it's far from providing good government for Ontarians. Many people have shown this Auditor General's report that we put forward today. The timing couldn't be better, because we're sitting here talking about good government, and yet there are so many issues in this province, so many issues. I hear from the other side all the time, "Well, we're putting things in place."

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I sat at the estimates committee and talked to the Minister of Health that day about how we could let something like eHealth happen twice. The answer was, "We've put things in place so it wouldn't happen." But that's what you said the first time that it happened. That's what you said when there was \$1 billion wasted that could have gone to front-line health care.

So now we have the Auditor General's report today, and you look at things like MPAC, which I know some other members have mentioned today. I can't believe that even after the government said they were going to stop those practices, that they were never going to happen again, we're seeing another agency where untendered contracts and outrageous expenses are being incurred. In fact, the AG characterized that it's just like eHealth. But again, I'm sure that the answers from the members opposite are going to be, "But, you know, we're glad that the AG told us, and it's never going to happen again." I'm sure that's going to be the speech that we hear over and over again in days to come.

I especially look at some of the issues with MPAC. You look at the fact that there were items—I'm seeing TaylorMade golf clubs, Nintendo Wii consoles and iPod touch models as promotional gifts that appear without any documentation as to who got them or why, as part of their mandate, they were provided. It makes no sense.

The auditor found that contracts for just under \$100,000 were awarded to three different contractors with little or no supporting documentation. Does that sound familiar to anybody? Does that sound familiar based on the scandals that we've seen from this government to date? It's shameful.

Another area that the Auditor General talked about was the discharge of patients. I could go on and on about local health integration networks, and I'm going to give you an example in a few moments of some of the things that go on in my own riding. But again, discharge of hospital patients: One in six patients in hospitals shouldn't even be there. The total days for ALC patients has increased 75% over the last five years, and it's now about 16% of the total days patients are hospitalized in Ontario.

The Auditor General talks about hospital emergency departments and the fact that half of ER visits were made by patients with less-urgent needs. Some patients were waiting 26 hours. That's disgraceful. That's not good government. You should be ashamed.

Home care services: 10,000 people are currently on waiting lists of up to 262 days for home care services. I've met with the LHINs in my constituency office, and I've challenged them because there's this perception in my riding of Leeds-Grenville that some of the home care services, some of the respite services, just aren't there and that our area has fewer services than other areas within our own LHINs, and we're covered by two LHINs. I don't think that's lucky that we've got two LHINs covering Leeds-Grenville. It's bad enough to have one, let alone two.

I remember meeting with them. Specifically, I talked to both the Champlain and the South East. I remember saying in a number of sessions with the South East LHIN, "Prove to me that our services are just as good as those in Kingston or those in Belleville," and, you know, they've never come back to me. These are issues like home care, that the Auditor General has talked about, and hospital emergency departments. I'd love finally, at some point, to get an answer to compare services in my riding to others in the LHIN's jurisdiction. I'm sick and tired of asking and getting no response.

Another area in the Auditor General's report is certainly near and dear to my heart because of my former background in municipal government, and that's infrastructure stimulus funding. First of all, the actual level of job creation is interesting. It's not surprising that it's not anywhere near what the government first said it would be. The Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure promised about 44,000 jobs, and in this program it only shows about 7,000, so there you go. There's the creative accounting from the other side.

The other thing was that there seems to be no limit on some applications. At the time, facing tight deadlines, there were a number of bids that were put forward, and the rush to the March 2011 deadline was difficult for a number of municipalities. So it's not surprising that there were some with this government—because they seem to be fast and loose—where projects were approved with no documentation. In some cases, even their own experts have ignored some of their comments. In the days and weeks ahead—I appreciate we're getting close to Christmas—I'd like that the government and the minister account for some of these issues.

Again, on the municipal side, waste disposal and diversion is something where the government talks the talk, but when you look at the numbers and what the Auditor General says, there are certainly some issues. In 2004 the government set a goal of diverting 60% of Ontario's waste from being disposed of in landfills by the end of 2008, and as we can see today, the combined diversion rate is a dismal 24%. In fact, today it took the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills to present a bill regarding organic waste, given that the Auditor General

has counted the fact that this government has been so far off in meeting their targets.

Again, when you look at this Auditor General's report, it's not good government. You're not providing the citizens of Ontario with good government. People who came to the general government committee said that to you and you ignored them. People are telling people on this side of the House every single day that there are issues, and now the Auditor General's report on a variety of issues—again, the minister stood up earlier about the Family Responsibility Office. I know there are a number of members on this side of the House who deal on a daily basis with the FRO. The deficiencies that the Auditor General talked about in 2003 he is bringing to the floor again today.

The government seems to have an interesting way of naming bills. This bill, as we said earlier, is An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts. It really is an act that amends a number of acts through seven schedules, but it could very easily have the name "Good Government" removed. I think it was the member for Welland who said we should throw out the name altogether; he brought that up at committee, and I supported him on his amendment. Really, this government is great at naming bills, but certainly they're sadly lacking at putting them into practice.

I can't wait for them to talk about MPAC. I know that our leader, Tim Hudak, brought a number of questions forward this morning that remain unanswered. I mentioned the issues we've got with LHINs just in my own riding.

I'm the newest MPP in this place, but I tried to hit the ground running when I was elected in March and I've tried to travel around my riding extensively to listen to what people are saying. When I was at a couple of Santa Claus parades on the weekend, one in particular on Saturday in Athens, a small village that I know the member for Peterborough loves—I know he loves Athens—they were aware of my private member's motion that the government shot down in flames this morning. I got an extremely great response from people that we on this side, in our PC caucus, are trying to fight to lower those energy bills, to try to make life more affordable for constituents in the province of Ontario. That's what people want. That's good government, not some flowery name.

I think it's appropriate at this time for me—I give out a lot of scrolls, and I've got a scroll prepared that I'm going to ask one of the pages to come up and hand over; you can give it to the government House leader or the Minister of Education or the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care or the Minister of Community and Social Services—

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me. If I could just let the member know that that is a prop.

Mr. Steve Clark: Madam Speaker, I go to events all over my riding—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): No, I'm hearing you, but you are breaking one of the standing orders of the House. If you could just leave it—send it with a page, by all means, but—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Actually, if you could stop the clock just for a second. Thank you.

If you could wrap up. Thank you, member.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm going to send this scroll down, because it is in recognition of this government's ridiculous naming of Bill 110, An Act to promote good government. In the next provincial election, Ontario families will have a clear choice between this out-of-touch McGuinty government and the Ontario PC government—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Needless to say, I enjoyed the member's clever use of a quasi-prop, because, of course, we're always sending things across the way to each other. Sometimes they're friendly and affectionate; sometimes they're hostile and critical.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you, page. It is a delightful scroll. It's not very inclusive, because in the next election, in October, Ontario families will be able to choose Conservative or New Democratic Party candidates to represent them here in the Legislative Assembly. I know that Andrea Horwath is working very, very hard travelling the province, and I'm confident that New Democrats will do well in the upcoming provincial election because I'm confident that the sorts of things that New Democrats have been telling folks are the sorts of things that folks are interested in hearing.

What they're hearing from the government is nothing but more bad news: Premier Dad, now Premier Bad—Premier McGuinty—wanting to protect children from second-hand smoke in cars, but now wanting 12- and 13-year-olds to blow mommy's credit card out of the sky playing Internet gambling in their bedroom; again, not-so-smart, stupid, dumb-and-dumber meters that are jacking up people's hydro rates; HST that has already compounded a hydroelectricity price increase that's going to be at least 46%—the government data says it's going to be 46%, and that means that it's going to be at least 46% over the next five years, or it could be 50%, 55%, 60%; and the government with its misleading advertising brochures that talk about cutting electricity rates by 10%, but not telling people that they're jacking them up by darn near 50%. If a retailer did that, they'd be in court quick as a boo and be penalized appropriately.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to the member from Leeds-Grenville speaking for almost 20 minutes about many different things. I understand his position. He doesn't like us as a government, which I understand, but we try our best as a government to clean up all the regulations and legislation to make them fit and flexible to serve the people of Ontario.

I know this Government Good Act, 2010, is intended to clean up many different legislations which involve several ministries to make them fit and flexible for the people of Ontario to use. I know he mentioned many different things about the auditor's report and he mentioned many different items; whatever he wanted to mention, he mentioned in his speech, but that's fine. In the end, this housekeeping bill is intended to serve the people of Ontario. It's not about political issues; it's not about how we want to score a point against the opposition. It's about cleaning up the whole legislation in order to make it fit and flexible for the people of Ontario to use on an ongoing basis.

We acknowledge that when you're in government, you're not safe. We do our best to fix many different things that we see don't fit and are not benefiting the people of Ontario. That's why we come every once in a while with a bill and laws to make sure it benefits the people of Ontario.

If the member from Leeds-Grenville thinks we're not good, then in October 2011, people will either keep us in office or elect a different government. I'm very confident when I go to talk to my constituents, when I talk to the people of Ontario, that they're happy with us for many different things because we are honest and clear. We don't hide from things; we face them, and we're trying to fix them.

Again, thank you for allowing me to speak in response to my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: It's amazing that the member from Leeds-Grenville, who has been here for such a short period of time, puts himself and expresses himself with such maturity, in terms of knowing the issues, understanding what this place is about and trying to improve the lot of not only his constituents in Leeds-Grenville but also trying to improve the lot of all Ontario citizens.

Notwithstanding what the previous member said from the Liberal backbenches, I was at a Santa Claus parade in Pakenham on Saturday afternoon and in Almonte on Sunday afternoon, and we had a lot of fun talking to the people, the kids in particular. I just love Santa Claus parades. I walk along beside the truck and hand the kids candy and talk briefly with them, and I can't tell you—there's not a better time of the year, in terms of having fun as an MPP in this place.

When we're talking in those terms, people are happy, but in behind that are the mothers and dads who have to pay the bills at the end of the month, and I think that's what the member for Leeds-Grenville is talking about: the difficulty they are having with rising energy costs, rising taxes and rising fuel costs, particularly in the constituency that he represents, in Leeds-Grenville, where people have to drive from place to place. This government has felt that it's their municipalities, those rural municipalities, that do not receive the kinds of rebates that organized municipalities do, and I'm talking about the gas tax rebate program.

The member for Leeds-Grenville certainly has put forward his constituents' concerns in his speech today on Bill 110.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. David Zimmer: We've heard time and time again about this good government bill, and the point's been made that it's essentially a cleanup on a lot of technical matters that all governments do over a number of years. We've heard that there are some 70 amendments covering some seven ministries.

I suppose one of the things that I'm very proud of in this piece of legislation is, in addition to the technical changes—and I say this as a lawyer who is trained to struggle with this legal language in some of these statutes—the great effort that's been taken in drafting these 70 amendments covering the seven ministries to keep the language as clear, as contemporary and as current as possible, because so often people go into the statute books reading a piece of law, and the language doesn't connect with their experience in the use of everyday language on the street or in the newspapers.

Now, we have to have some very technical pieces of language in the statutes and so on, but wherever possible, we should try to make the language connect with the real way that people use the language in media, in the streets and in their ordinary conversation. In fact, there's a whole movement throughout the legal community, especially in North America and in England, to recraft, to redraft, as many statutes as they can, always keeping in mind what they call "the plain use language." Because, to the extent that people can easily and plainly understand what a statute says, that's good for democracy.

As a lawyer who has a lot of experience, who has had a lot of experience, in drafting statutes and other legal documents, I just wanted to say that's one of the things that I'm most pleased about in Bill 110.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Leeds-Grenville has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to thank the member for Welland, the member for London-Fanshawe, the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills and the member for Willowdale. I think there certainly was a wide-ranging discussion in the comments and questions.

1700

Again, I just want to go back to the words that I heard in committee. Over and over again, we heard deputations questioning this government and their commitment on this bill. There were a number of suggestions that, while the government said they would take them under advisement, they really were just bound to make the amendments they were going to make and end the process.

We're sitting here today, looking at the Auditor General's report, with some of the same issues that have hurt Ontario families—untendered contracts, lavish spending, not meeting their targets—issues that were addressed by the Auditor General years before and are still not acted upon. That's not good government. That's not what people expect in the province of Ontario.

I'll tell you, when I stood here on Thursday with my private member's motion and tried to provide some protection to Ontario families on their energy bill, I was shocked at the number of members opposite who showed up to vote it down. I'll tell you, we're all having our own little Christmas parties over the next few weeks. I have one on Sunday from 3 to 5 at the Royal Brock Hotel. Taking a page from what the member for London-Fanshawe says, come on over and listen to my constituents. They'll give you an earful.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I wanted to speak to Bill 110 because it gives me an opportunity to talk about a number of issues that we have in front of us in this Legislature, and the government of Ontario has those challenges as well. And—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Government House leader.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Is the government House leader going to speak? I mean, they passed their opportunity to speak up.

Interjection.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Madam Speaker, Madam Speaker.

Interjection.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: What I wanted to talk about today was, in addition to the matters that are brought forward in this bill—I believe that the Legislature could be spending its time in a lot more productive way if we actually took certain particular parts of either the auditor's report or areas where we recognize there is a real program deficiency or program problem.

The Auditor General has very clearly pointed out one that seems to recur time after time after time, and that is the Family Responsibility Office. One of the first tasks that I undertook as the chair of the public accounts committee, way back in 2004, after the Dalton McGuinty government got into place, was the first review of the 2003 report on the Family Responsibility Office. I just want to paint this picture so that we understand how long the problems like the Family Responsibility Office go on and on and on, and it seems to be out of the capacity of the government to solve the problem.

In 2004, when we had the hearing, it was interesting because IT, their information system, was a real problem. They were still using paper files at that time. We had the deputy minister in front of us, and the deputy minister said to us at that time, "We're going to spend"—I believe the number was \$16 million—" \$16 million to remedy the situation." We were going to get an IT system that was that costly.

Members of the committee from all the parties talked about the fact that British Columbia seemed to have a much better-functioning equivalent of the Family Responsibility Office, and that they were able to respond on the phone within four or five minutes, whereas we

were 70 or 80 minutes. We heard that that problem of lengthy response or no response is still with us today.

Interjections.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I hear the crowing from the government benches about how hard and difficult this problem is, but really nothing has succeeded from then to now with regard to what has happened. In fact, it may indeed have gotten worse than it was in 2003. But all we know is that it's a mess. It is a mess. The IT: They started to work on the information system in 2003 and 2004, and in 2006 they abandoned it. They abandoned their initial—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Government House leader.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: They abandoned their initial go at it, and now they're back at it, planning to spend \$50 million. The suggestion of the committee was, "Why don't you go out to BC and buy their system off them. It's got all the bugs out of it. You may have to modify your program slightly in order to do that, but it may be more worthwhile to make some minor policy adjustments and have a system that actually works than stick with our unique legislative requirements."

Why I'm telling this story is, I understand how difficult the Family Responsibility Office operation is, and I understand how difficult it sometimes is to extract payment from somebody who doesn't want to pay that money and is avoiding it like the plague. But what I think this Legislature has to do instead of spending afternoons talking about a bill that is rather innocuous—it has a few changes that perhaps are important, but generally speaking, it's housekeeping—why don't we as a group, as members of the Legislature, try to bring back on the plate of a select committee, for instance, the Family Responsibility Office? Let's talk about how it has failed in the past. And listen, it hasn't only failed under the Liberal government. It failed under the Conservative government, it failed under the NDP government, it failed under the previous Liberal government and it failed, actually, under the previous Conservative government. Nobody has got it right, because it's a very difficult problem.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: That was an admission.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Well, sure it's an admission. I don't mind admitting that it didn't work under our government. But it hasn't worked under your government as well. And so—

Interjection.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: No, it's not. It's not working much better. That's the problem. And you see—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Please speak through the Chair.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock for a minute.

Could you please direct your comments through the Chair, and also please do not engage in cross-aisle

debate. If you'd like to debate with members other than the one speaking, you're welcome to take it out to the lounge.

The member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The purpose of using this particular problem, the Family Responsibility Office, is because it is a difficult task to undertake. The Auditor General, when we did the previous report in 2004, said to the committee that this was not the first time—he was talking about 2003—that he had reviewed it. He had reviewed it in the 1990s; he had reviewed it in the 1980s. Now he has reviewed it in 2010, and we're getting the same result time after time, and the people who need the help are not getting the help.

I don't know how you can argue against that particular supposition when 80% of calls are not being answered by the Family Responsibility Office.

Interjection.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Eighty per cent: That's the auditor's number. It's a recognition that the structure or the policy is failing, and all I am saying is—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It's a technology problem.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: They tried to remedy the technology. The minister says it's a technology problem. It was a technology problem seven years ago, and they haven't solved it. I understand that technology contracts are difficult, but why don't we as a group or as a select committee get together and say, "Why is this continuing to fail?" We should address this problem. Governments in the past have tried to address the problem and they've all failed. So why don't we use the collective wisdom of all or some of the members here who are interested in this issue, have a select committee and say, "Okay, let's call in the workers. Let's call in some people who are involved in this. Let's call in the employers who are transferring the cheques. Let's call in some people from British Columbia, where it seems to work better than it does here. And as a group, let's make some recommendations to the government as to whether we need to move some policies, we need to make it simpler or we need to redefine it. Let's put in some measures so that we know that, with any changes that occur, whether or not it's succeeding better than it has before."

1710

Let's not wait another seven years for another auditor's report, in 2017 or 2018, to tell us that the IT system hasn't been developed; that we're still waiting; that 60%, 70% or 80% of the calls are not getting through; that the wait times on the phone are 40 or 50 minutes, where I remember in 2004 in BC they were three or four minutes. Why don't we just get together our collective heads and say, "Look, this isn't a Liberal thing, this is not a Conservative thing, this is not an NDP thing. This is about trying to improve the service to people who are in desperate need of a service to help them get money to feed their kids and to maintain their homes." So I say that as an example of the way that our government is continuing to govern and this Legislature is continuing to act.

We need to get together on another subject as well, and that is waste diversion. Waste diversion is in another chapter of today's auditor's report: section 3.09, "Non-hazardous Waste Disposal and Diversion." This is very much of importance to me because I have a very large proposal to expand a landfill site which is essentially adjacent to a 26,000-person residential area in the village of Stittsville, which has had serious problems with the existing landfill. They're very concerned about another expansion and the detrimental effects to their community. I might add that it's a gateway to our capital, and you can see this mountain of garbage as you drive into the city of Ottawa from the west.

While that is a local problem for my constituents—and I am fighting tooth and nail in order to avoid that—why don't we have a select committee on non-hazardous waste disposal and diversion?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Is that the second or third select committee you've suggested?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: That's the second one. I'd like to suggest—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Government House leader.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: The government House leader says that this is the second or third select committee. You know what? I'd rather have 20 select committees with members who are genuinely interested in a particular area of policy working together with their counterparts and their counterparts from other parties to try to solve problems, because we know these problems have not only existed during this government, but they've existed over time. There's no sense in blaming each other for this or for that. We've got to solve the problems going forward. And who better than members of the Legislature to be involved in solving these problems?

What we've had in the past, and what has led to non-action, or very little action, has been the fact that we have entrusted this to the bureaucracy—to bring forward the solutions. The bureaucracy doesn't interface with the average constituent; they're interfacing with the interest groups. They're meeting with the waste disposal companies. They're meeting with industry, which produces the waste. They're meeting with municipalities, who are doing a much better job in waste diversion than business is. But nobody is meeting with or representing the average joe on the street who is concerned about what happens to their solid waste disposal.

What I would suggest, again, in this particular situation is that we have a group from this Legislature that is interested in the waste diversion issue—I would be very much interested in this particular one—sit down and say, "Okay, let's call the experts forward." I know that everybody has their own solution to waste diversion and waste reduction and dealing with this issue, but let's really call the experts, the people who know. Let's cross-examine the experts on what their expertise is and talk about costs and possible solutions: whether or not incineration is a real, possible solution; whether putting

organic waste through digesters and spreading it on fields is good or bad and what the risks associated with it are.

At least you have an intelligent conversation. You have an intelligent bringing together of ideas. Eventually, hopefully, it will lead to a result which all parties can have their say in, and then you have actually attacked and dealt with the problem.

What I have seen over a long period of time is that we continue to have the normal approach to these problems, and that is the government bureaucrats bring forward a suggestion for legislation to cabinet, and usually that legislation is in a framework, so there are these overarching ideas but nothing is filled in. And by the time it's filled in and we see it hit the ground as MPPs and we talk to people in our constituency offices, it's a very different thing than we ever imagined when we passed the legislation in here.

So I would say to the government, why don't we use the forces and the knowledge of MPPs to say that if a program goes off the rails or is difficult and it hasn't been successfully dealt with, why not try to solve it? Solve it with the collective wisdom of everybody in here. We're all going to have different views. We may not come to 100% agreement on all issues, but at least they will be addressed, MPPs will understand what the costs are, what the risks are associated with whatever the problem is, and we just won't hear rhetoric and talk in here which doesn't really mean anything in the end, and the problem continues on.

You see that time over time over time in terms of dealing with issues in front of the public accounts committee. I could name you 10 particular problems we have here with regard to ODSP. The process that one has to go through in order to obtain Ontario disability payments and help is a process that the auditor pointed out in last year's report is not working. We have to have an adult discussion about how we can make that process work better. That's a \$3-billion program.

We had last year a report from the committee on assistive devices—that's wheelchairs and oxygen supplies for people who need them. The Auditor General clearly pointed out that the structure of that program is not working. Why not have an adult discussion with members of the Legislature and say, "Let's call in the people who are supplying this. Let's look at what Quebec and Alberta are doing with regard to assistive devices," because in Alberta and Quebec they're actually recycling some of those assistive devices, those motorized wheelchairs and those kinds of things. Here, there's no recycling going on because everybody buys a new one.

1720

I guess the overall thrust of what I am saying is, here we are dealing with Bill 110, which deals with an amendment here, an amendment there, an amendment here, an amendment there with regard to a whole number of acts, but doesn't have any real impact on what's going on. I say let's forget about dealing with these kinds of things in three or four days. Let's use our time, recognize a problem, get some of the members of the Legislature

together, get some expertise in, get some help from the legislative library or legislative research, and find out what the real information is about what we're doing and try to address the problem.

We have to change how we do business here in order to provide the taxpayer with a better value for dollar. The auditor does a very good job in looking back at whether we got value for money there, but going forward is another story. We haven't got our act together as to how we can advise the government—because MPPs have more time than cabinet ministers, MPPs have more time than deputy ministers to actually look down into the problem and try to provide a reasonable, logical and moderate approach to solving problems that continue on there. This is so evident with regard to the Family Responsibility Office that we have to do something to do it better rather than have a report in 2017 and 2018. I'm going to be here in 2017 and 2018, and I don't want to see this again.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I listened very carefully to the comments by the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills and I found his to be a very valuable contribution to this debate. I was disturbed by the disruptive interjections and heckling by government members because they would have served themselves far better by listening.

The member has had this to say about committees before; he's been here a long time. He's been here such a long time that he's witnessed the decline of committees, the diminishment of committees. He's witnessed committees turning into rather irrelevant bodies. They used to be, not only in his time but in my time as well, a very effective way for members of the public to provide some incredibly valuable counsel to the government and to the Parliament, and almost inevitably for free. They would come forward and produce very serious submissions on some very serious matters.

There was also a level of collegiality and collaboration on committees. Not that they weren't partisan, but when it came down to committees that were discussing the various sorts of things that the member talked about—the Family Responsibility Office; again, his model of bringing in the workers, bringing in management, bringing in people from other jurisdictions is an ideal proposal, one that the minister seems to mock and deride very regrettably.

Every time the government gets involved with IT, the government gets its pocket picked, and the FRO in this government is an example of that again.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills gave very good advice. I wish that he would have taken this advice when they were in power instead of cutting staff by 41%.

Let me tell you a little bit about FRO—and I want to correct him. He's saying that complaints are increasing. No, that's not so. I am monitoring, on a monthly basis,

the calls from recipients to MPPs' offices and there is a major, major reduction in calls.

Interjection.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: If it's not, you just need to talk to me and I will check on it, because we are receiving on a monthly basis.

Let's talk about the information technology system. It was suggested that there was a good one in BC and that it was working well. That's the contract that we have given to that company, and it didn't work at all, so we had to cancel the contract; we had to control our costs. We have a new company now that is working, and there is oversight from the chief information officer. Let's hope that we will have this in place as soon as possible, because without this technology, we are dealing with 150,000 support payments on a monthly basis. There are 150,000 cases. Some are being resolved, or the parents are not entitled, the children are not entitled, to the support payments. There is, on a monthly basis, about 150,000 coming in and 150,000 going out. And the—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My colleague the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills has made some really interesting and, I think, innovative comments this afternoon with respect to Bill 110, the unfortunately named Good Government Act.

In the context of the auditor's report, which was just released today—it's quite thick, as you can see—the member commented on the report specifically with respect to the Family Responsibility Office.

I can say, despite the comments made by the minister, that the Family Responsibility Office remains a significant problem for many of us as members. I would say probably at least 25% of the questions and comments I get into my office deal with the Family Responsibility Office, from the antique accounting system, to the lack of answers to the phone calls, to their inability to deal with anything other than really just standard collection issues. Any time you have a situation where you have a payor who is outside of the jurisdiction, you can pretty much count on not getting paid, as the recipient.

The auditor noted that some 20,000 individuals have been forced into accepting social assistance because they have been unable to collect the support payments through the Family Responsibility Office.

I really respect the comments that were made by my colleague to the extent that it's not a situation that is the responsibility of any one government. There are problems with the system, and we need to get people around the table to talk about it. I happen to believe that select committees are a very good idea. We had a very positive experience with the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions.

We always have a situation here where members of the opposition and, frankly, members of the government backbench are underutilized. They have lots to contribute. Using that in the context of a select committee is a way to really deal with the problem.

I think there's a massive disconnect between what we do here and what our constituents actually expect that we do here, which is to work together for their best interests. We need to get back to that, and the select committee is a good way to approach it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I did listen to the comments of my good friend from Carleton–Mississippi Mills. He does sit as the Chair of the public accounts committee. From time to time, I've had the opportunity to sit on that committee and I've always enjoyed that, because I think by being on the public accounts committee, you get to learn a lot, particularly when you're going through a series of reports that Mr. McCarter, the Auditor General, has zeroed in on. He goes through them, looks at the historical perspective and then, indeed, looks at how things can be improved.

I must say, from my own personal experience, that in my office, we get significant inquiries regarding the Family Responsibility Office. I think in my case it has improved somewhat since my experience in 2003 and 2004 to what we have now in 2010. But I do think—and this is just a personal perspective of someone who has now been here seven years—there's an opportunity.

We should have, in any given parliamentary year—or session, I should say, or Parliament—four or five select committees looking at a variety of topics. I had a wonderful experience with two of my colleagues opposite on the select committee on mental health services in the province of Ontario. But my understanding is that, before this select committee, the last one was a select committee on alternative fuels that toured the province of Ontario and that came up with several recommendations.

From my personal perspective, this would be one way to significantly improve what goes on in this place, by having four or five select committees out there operating, selecting topics, doing the appropriate research and then canvassing the broad perspective of opinion in the province of Ontario. Indeed, those recommendations could help the government of the day bring forward legislation in those specific areas.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I want to thank the member from Peterborough, to lead in into my response. The public accounts committee does a good job of looking back and making recommendations and that kind of thing, but where we're hampered is that we can't make recommendations with regard to change of policy. We can see situations where the policies that a government has set forward—and in the case of the Family Responsibility Office, I think that most of those policies were made in the 1980s. We don't really look at them and say, "Are these practical? And can any administration function well under the policies and rules that are there now?"

That's what I'm trying to say here. I'm not trying to say to the minister that you've done better or worse,

slightly better or slightly worse or whatever it is. All I know is that from this report, there are still huge, significant problems dealing with the Family Responsibility Office. What I would really like is, rather than saying that the BC IT is wrong or doesn't work—it didn't work because the ministry was not willing to look at policy changes to fit the policy to the IT. In this case, the IT is probably more important than sticking to 100% of your policy.

That's what business does now. Business alters their business practices to fit the IT sometimes. We have to think that way here in order to have functioning units of government to serve our people. I think that we have to be open-minded about that, and we have to be very inclusive of all MPPs here and use their knowledge, use their resource in order to solve problems as we go forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I had to go do some other things in my office today, and I always thought that debates in this House were on a rotational basis. I recognize that the member for Welland has already spoken to the debate. As you know, the standing orders do not provide for a member to speak twice to the bill on the same reading, so that precludes the member from Welland from speaking to the bill, but all of these government members on the other side of the House are not speaking. I'm concerned.

One of two things could have happened here, and neither is good. One is that the members on the government side are so embarrassed by what's been going on here, this bill included, but more in a general way the record of the government over this past year in particular, that they don't even want to speak to this bill; or, as has happened so many times in the past, they've just been told to sit down: "Don't say a word. Don't debate."

It's interesting, because the people across the province of Ontario expect that when we come to this Legislature, we come here to debate the legislation that is put before this chamber. That is, in fact, what we are elected to do—part of what we are elected to do. Much of what we are elected to do, Madam Speaker, as you know, is more localized, ensuring that the constituents we represent have a connection to government. We are their connection as individual MPPs. We are their connection not only to Queen's Park here but the provincial government in general. Good government: It makes sense. That's why each one of us, as an individual member, tries to provide service to our constituents, to ensure that, in the best way possible, whether we sit on the opposition side or the government side, we are representing them and bringing good government back to our ridings.

I'm always interested in what my colleague from Carleton–Mississippi Mills has to say. When you've been here as long as he has been serving in this chamber—I think he's served about five different ridings in the province. Because of redistributions, the boundaries of my friend Mr. Sterling's riding have changed over the

years, but the one constant is the personal connection he offers to his people up in his part of eastern Ontario, which currently, of course, is the riding of Carleton-Mississippi Mills.

I know he's talking about committees. Now, he is the Chair of the public accounts committee, which I have said on more than one occasion is probably the most important committee that functions in this chamber, because part of the work it does is reflected, many times, in the decisions of the auditor as to which parts of the government he's going to dissect in his latest report, analyze and report back to the House on.

The auditor, Jim McCarter, does a tremendous job and provides a tremendous service to the people of Ontario, and by extension, I guess, to the government, then by extension to the people, and also so that we, as members, know where the government has fallen down on the job with respect to its failure to properly account for and manage the finances of the province and treat the money with respect. Each and every year, when the auditor brings out his report—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It's always interesting.

Mr. John Yakabuski: My friend the Minister of Community and Social Services says, "It's always interesting." No question: It is always interesting. Sometimes there are ministers who are ducking when the auditor's report comes out, and sometimes there are ministers who just want to run away and hide for a while. There's ducking, and then there's hiding.

But each and every year, there are issues brought forward in the auditor's report that cause us to pause and ask ourselves, "Is the government actually following through on the commitments it has made from day one with respect to accountability, transparency and diligence in taking care of the finances of the province, in various ministries—in all ministries? Are they actually following through on that?" Each and every year, when the auditor's report comes out, it casts doubt on whether the government is actually doing that.

As I said, my friend from Carleton-Mississippi Mills is the Chair of the public accounts committee. I have had the opportunity to sit in on a few sessions. I'm not a member of the committee, but from time to time there are issues brought before the committee, and all members of this House, for people out there who don't know that, have the opportunity to sit in on hearings of the committee and, on most occasions, are allowed to ask questions if there are any witnesses or deputants before the committee, whether they're members of the committee or not. Each and every one of the members of the House wants to ensure that they're aware of how issues brought before that committee, or any other committee, may or may not affect their constituents or their respective roles as critics on the opposition side or, obviously, as ministers on the government side.

I remember when my dad was a member here—that's a long time ago—and there were so many select committees then that were given specific duties and roles in specific areas. There may have been a select committee

on workers' compensation at the time or a Select Committee on Automobile Insurance. They actually studied different systems and how they worked. There was a lot of work done by those committees. It would appear today that the government really doesn't want committees to have that kind of work.

1740

You know what the committees do today? They do what they're told. It's really a bad system. You've got six government members on a committee and three opposition members. Now, six and three: I don't think you have to think too hard to know what side is going to get their way every time, should they choose to. It's very hard, even when there are vitally important and pertinent and valuable pieces of advice and suggestions, really relevant things brought forward to committee by members of the opposition side. Members on the government side simply do as they've been told, the directions they've received from the minister's office, and then they just nod in unison, vote in favour or, if it's an opposition amendment, they vote against it. If you want to talk about good government, there's a place we could really start.

In the federal House, the committees have a different composition. The opposition actually has some say. The opposition actually can effect change at the committee level—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock, please. I know it's late in the day—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Excuse me, the Speaker is standing. I know it's late in the day, and I know people are getting antsy, but, however, there is a speaker speaking, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. I would ask that others keep the heckling down to a minimum so that we can at least hear what he has to say.

Mr. John Yakabuski: If committees could be made to be more realistic and effective, not just extensions of the government so that they can say, "Well, we dealt with that in committee," or whatever, but for the untrained as to what the parliamentary procedures are here in this House—because it doesn't get seen much on television. Bell ExpressVu, the satellite provider, and Star Choice, the satellite provider, don't even broadcast the legislative channel anymore, which to me is a disgrace. I'm not suggesting that it would be way up there on the Nielsen ratings—some days would be better than others—but at the same time, I think every person in this country who wants to have an opportunity to view the proceedings of their respective Legislature should be able to do so. I'll come back to that. That's a good point; I'll come back to that.

For those people out there who don't know how the committee system works or how the procedures work here, they might think, "Oh, boy, that's great. The government is sending this bill or that bill off to committee." But the reality is that unless the government wants to make changes to that bill at committee, there will be no

changes made. If the government wants amendments to be passed, amendments will be passed. If the minister says, "Oh, let Yakabuski yap on for a little bit at the committee, but as soon as he brings forth a motion, snap him. Done. We will not allow anything that he or the member from the New Democratic Party wants to put forward." You have to ask yourself, how valuable is that process sometimes? Or is it just a way of being able to say that our Legislature requires that bills go from here to the committee? Unless they're passed in the House by unanimous consent through second and third reading, it requires them to go through the committee process. Sometimes it's just a little bit of window dressing.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's just a bit of window dressing, but it provides good fodder for the members of the government and for the ministers to put into their speaking notes as they're travelling throughout the province in their fancy limousines.

It is nice that we're getting close to the Christmas recess as well, because I know each and every one of us looks forward to that time with our families, to get home and spend some time in the ridings, but also to be able to maybe spend a little bit of an extended time with our families as well through the Christmas season.

Of course, tonight at 6 o'clock we'll be beginning the Lights Across Canada. Speaker Peters is the initiator in our Legislature, but all across the country we'll be joining other legislative chambers in a simultaneous celebration. I guess not exactly simultaneous, because BC is on a different clock than we are, but you know what I mean.

Interjection: No. What do you mean, John?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm closer to being right than the government is on this committee business sometimes. But anyway, let's talk about good government again. Let's talk about that television issue.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: That's important, Bell ExpressVu?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I think it is important, and I caution the government House leader not to dismiss things out of hand sometimes, because they are important to people. You know, in the rural areas, people don't have cable television. What they have is generally a satellite system, and all of the satellite providers have taken—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Some might even have rabbit ears.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, yes. My friend the Minister of Community and Social Services says some might even have rabbit ears. I don't know if there are too many rabbit ears left out there, but there are on the rabbits, I will say to her. I have seen many of the rabbits and they still have ears, certainly the ones that I see crossing the road and in walks through the woods as well.

But back to the television: The satellite providers no longer broadcast the legislative proceedings from Ontario. You see, I think that the government of Ontario

should be acting in the strongest way possible to influence the CRTC, the Canadian radio and television commission, or whatever they call it. I might not have the words exactly right, but the CRTC; you know what I'm talking about. I would think that it would be prudent, because on the satellite feed that comes into Ontario homes, if I'm not mistaken, you can get either the Saskatchewan or the British Columbia legislative proceedings. Now, they'd be really, really important to the people of Ontario, I would think. Right.

I would think it would be prudent for anyone who provides a satellite signal throughout Ontario, or any other province, that it become part of the mandated service requirements of the CRTC that they must broadcast the proceedings of the respective Legislature of the customer getting the satellite feed, so that if you are broadcasting in Ontario, you must provide a channel. There are all kinds of channels that are required.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member for Peterborough. Order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You don't ask for them; you don't buy them. It's considered mandatory by the CRTC that you broadcast that feed, and there are a number of them on all television satellite providers' signals. They could add to that a requirement that the broadcasting of the legislative chamber of the respective jurisdiction be part of that mandatory service. To me, that's something that this government—it's during their term that they pulled it. It's during this government's term that both Bell ExpressVu and Star Choice have pulled that service. It's a disservice to rural Ontarians because a lot of them would like to know what is going on at the Ontario Legislature. Some of them would possibly be tuning in right now to hear what's being said about the television feed, but, oh, no, they can't tune in because they don't have that feed.

Anyway, on the good government bill, it clearly is—
1750

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm sorry, Madam Speaker. Did I do something wrong?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I'd just ask to stop the clock for a second.

We can miss the performance on the stairs if the government House leader would like us to. Otherwise, I would ask her to please come to order, and let's listen to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I only have a couple of minutes left. I'm sure that the members on the government side will allow me an uninterrupted opportunity to finish up my part of the debate.

You really have to ask yourself about this bill, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts. I have a suggestion for an act to promote good government. In fact, we already have it as part of our constitution. In fact, we already have a day scheduled for an act to promote good government. We have that

date scheduled. It's October 6, 2011. It's called the democratic process; it's called the election. I would hope that that is what Ontarians see as their opportunity to pass judgment on this government or any government. It's part of our democratic process.

I know that people across Ontario are looking forward to it, and they're looking forward to analyzing and evaluating just what the McGuinty government has been up to for seven years. They would certainly, I'm sure, much more hope that the government was actually doing something to make their lives better and not doing things to burden them in such a terrible way.

My goodness, we're going to have to get more time, because I was just going to get into the hydro situation now, and how this government has literally crucified ratepayers and businesses, seniors and families across this province with the price of electricity, and that's something that—I know the people want to have their chance to vote on good government on October 6, 2011.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Today, of course, we received the Auditor General's annual report for 2010. That, obviously, is rife with revelations about this government's incompetence and its indifference to the people of Ontario.

Tomorrow at 1 o'clock, I believe, our Ombudsman, André Marin, will be releasing his report on this government's botch-up of—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Merry Christmas.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The minister says.

This government's botch-up of and their role in the fake G20 regulation may well have some light shone on it. It remains to be seen. I'm sure Marin did his usual competent best. I'm sure government members are as excited as I am about that event tomorrow.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: He's my buddy in Ottawa.

Mr. Peter Kormos: She notes.

I'm sure the government House leader will be enthused. Indeed, I'm sure she has that time slot marked in her diary, 1 o'clock, because of course we all know Mr. Marin; we all have a great deal of respect and affection for him, and we are just so pleased that he earned a second term as Ombudsman in the province of Ontario. I'm sure that his assistance—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Yakabuski notes. Did you get that heckle? Because I acknowledged Mr. Yakabuski. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): If the member from Welland could mention the person's riding, not their name.

Mr. Peter Kormos: We're looking forward to it, with excitement, and we'll be speaking about that in due course, too, I'm sure.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Well, will wonders ever cease? The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke actually said something of substance that I agree with.

The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke obviously, dimly in his memory, will recall a private member's resolution that I did about two years ago which his entire party supported; in fact, the resolution was passed unanimously by the House. You know what it called for? It said that we called upon the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, the CRTC, to insist that, as a condition of being able to carry content, that one channel be dedicated to the Ontario Legislature, or indeed to the provincial Legislature in any province that the entity proposes carrying a signal, and one channel be dedicated to the federal Parliament.

It's nice to see the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke reach back and bring what I thought at the time, and his party fully supported, was a really enlightened view to regulation of broadcast programming. Now, I would be absolutely delighted if he took my private member's resolution—where executing it is beyond the scope of this House because, of course, as a provincial Legislature, we don't regulate broadcasting; that's done by the federal government. I would be delighted in joining with him and his party in working with our federal government to bring forth exactly, precisely that resolution at the federal level. Why don't we each—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I didn't realize it was all that contentious. I thought this was kind of a motherhood issue.

Why don't we each get on the cases of our overlapping federal members and kick them to do exactly that? Thank you for bringing it up.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to comment on the comments made by the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

It was a breath of fresh air to hear so much discussion and debate this afternoon about the benefit of select committees. I've only had the opportunity to participate in one; that was, of course, the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. It was a very positive experience from both the side of listening to people, hearing from individuals directly affected by the issue, but as valuable, of course, were the actual discussions afterwards where we were able to come together as members from the NDP, the Progressive Conservatives and the Liberals and bring forward 23 recommendations.

I will say, as positive as the experience was, and the feedback on the report that was ultimately tabled in August was also very positive, we are now at the waiting stage. So the government has had the select committee's recommendations since the end of August, and there has been very little action.

As much as I appreciate the importance and the value of what select committees can do and how we can incorporate them into our work as legislators, I would hate to see that this becomes yet another bookend in our work in this legislative session. So the other half of allowing more select committees to be part of our process also means that there has to be some credibility and some follow-up when there has been that much time, energy, commitment and consensus brought forward on the issues.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to thank the members for Welland, Mississauga–Streetsville and Dufferin–Caledon for their comments on my speaking today on Bill 110.

I'm just going to touch on the member for Mississauga–Streetsville for the time being—I know I don't have a lot of time. He talks about his resolution with respect to what I talked about, the CRTC and carrying the feed from the respective Legislatures. I remember when he brought in that resolution, but the point is, I say to the member for Mississauga–Streetsville, the resolution that you brought forward really doesn't carry the weight. What you need is for your party, your government, the

McGuinty ministers to actually do something about it and put some pressure on the CRTC.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Federal jurisdiction.

Mr. John Yakabuski: If they want to do it through the federal government, so be it. Talk to the federal government. But passing a resolution in this chamber is simply not effective enough. Madam Speaker, you know that and the member for Mississauga–Streetsville knows that. It just doesn't do it. You've got to put some meat on the bone here and you've got to put some action behind the words; put some pressure on the CRTC to actually do something about it and follow through, not a resolution.

The resolution is something that he can take back to his stakeholders and say, "Look what I did." Well, that's not enough. This government needs to act. That's the problem with this government: a whole lot of talk, not a lot of actual substance, not a lot of action. It's the same thing about this bill: There's not much in it. They're doing a little housekeeping, but we've been debating it for five weeks now because the government's got no good stuff to actually talk about.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It being slightly past 6 of the clock, I declare that this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial



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Second reading agreed to	3968
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XI
D23

Government
Publications



No. 80



Nº 80

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 7 December 2010

Mardi 7 décembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 7 December 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 7 décembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Jewish prayer.

Prayers.

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Speaker: quorum?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Clerk will see if there is a quorum present.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECURING PENSION BENEFITS NOW AND FOR THE FUTURE ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PÉRENNITÉ DES PRESTATIONS DE RETRAITE

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 120, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010 / Projet de loi 120, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite et la Loi de 2010 modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: The pension issue is coming to a head with a vote shortly. It's not a new issue in this House—it's not a new one for any of us—and it has implications more than ever now on a variety of levels for people across the province, for people, indeed, across our entire country. There are a variety of solutions that are being proposed, but there's nothing simple. This bill, taken on its own, doesn't solve the problem. It addresses a piece of the problem, and this is a problem that is unfolding before us.

If you take a good look at me—and I'll look right at that television camera so the folks at home can participate—you can see by my boyish good looks that I'm not a day over 55. That's what it looks like, but it's not true. I am; I'm past Freedom 55. As I have stated in this House before—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I know you're surprised—I'm without any defined benefit pension plan. I have no defined benefit pension plan. I'm not whining about it. It's a fact of life for people in this House; it's a fact of life for 70% of people in Ontario, for whom there is no defined benefit pension plan. I share this more as a fact than from some elevated position or as somebody who believes that he is somehow or other entitled, because I'm not any more entitled than the other 70% of people who have to fend for themselves going forward.

The other very important fact that has to be seriously considered is that we're all living longer. I just said that I've passed 55. I'm 63 years old. My first memories of my maternal grandmother, who was the only grandparent I ever met, were when I was five and she was 63. She was a little, old, hobbled lady, with those funny shoes—63 was very old. Today, I'm not very old, and I expect to live another 20 years and, if I'm lucky—or unlucky, depending on how it works—maybe 30.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Don't you say it; I know what you're thinking.

We're living longer, definitely, but are we saving? Are we saving for that greater longevity? The answer is that most people are not. They are not for a variety of reasons, not least because it's almost impossible to save. First of all, we grew up in a culture where we needed instant gratification, so people spend their money more or less from hand to mouth. And now we live in a culture where a lot of us don't have that opportunity anymore to buy the things that we want; we're just spending it on things we need and we're exhausting it. This is a national problem; it's also a provincial problem and it is an individual problem. We are living to 80, to 90, and most people have not had the foresight to think, "I am going to live longer, so I'm going to have to save." It's my belief and it is our party's belief that ultimately the answer to this lies within the private sector, not the public sector. We all know that the private sector has the vision and the creativity to accomplish what government will not. We could always come up with an easy way out. The example would be, "We'll just double the benefits of the Canada pension plan." A lot of people say, "Why can't we do that? It's the government's money." There's no such thing as government money. The government's money is your money, it's my money, it's all of our money, and it doesn't come off a printing press because we happen to think maybe it's a good idea to double Canada pension plan benefits.

If we were to do something like that—that money comes from you; it comes from taxpayers. And if it's not you who are the direct beneficiary of a doubling of the Canada pension plan, then it's you who are paying increased taxes that you certainly cannot afford to make sure that those of us who are going to form the largest cohort age-wise in the province—as of 2017, more people will be over 65 than any other cohort. We don't have the tax base that can afford to pay us the kind of money that would be required to double the Canada pension plan. It sounds easy, but it isn't. And we're forgetting an important question: Where is this money going to come from?

I'm getting the time sign here from my friend, but I have some more to say.

Speaking of the private sector, I must speak to the growing disconnect between the private sector and the public sector as it relates to pensions, specifically with the Ontario teachers' pension plan. There is a line item in this year's budget where there was a \$500-million contribution from general tax revenues to sustain the fund. Let's face it: Most businesses are not able to participate or even operate in this way. Once upon a time in my own life, and probably, I venture, in the lives of most people here who have ever worked in a corporate environment, a defined benefit pension plan was part and parcel of what you did. When I was 18 or 19 and had just gotten out of university, I went to work for a company, now defunct, called Standard Broadcasting. It was a big company controlled by the Argus Corp., which became Hollinger, and—I say this by way of point of interest—the fellow at the top was a guy named Conrad Black; you may have heard of him, a guest of the US government for a little while. He was my boss, not then but ultimately. The first thing I had to do was fill out an employee card and sign my defined benefit pension plan card. When I was unceremoniously bid adieu from that company some years later, they handed me a great big cheque that was the proceeds of my pension fund to date, but I couldn't cash it. That was a good thing. It went into a pension fund which forms part of what I've saved over the course of my life. Fortunately, I've had some foresight. I don't know if I've had enough foresight to not be able to work at this point. Most people don't; I've mentioned that. My point being that that was then and this is now. We don't sign defined benefit pension cards anymore unless we're members of the public sector. The public sector is the new elite; 30% of the population has pension benefits that are in defined plans, and most of those people work in the public sector.

Some small businesses may have a defined contribution plan, similar to what we have here at Queen's Park. That's a plan where the business contributes an amount towards an RRSP and the employee gets to match it. We know that the private sector world is moving in that direction, but this is not the case for the public sector. People in the public sector can retire with various factors in their mid-50s. I've mentioned that I'm in my 60s; many people here are. Some of us work here—I would

say that I do—because we like the idea of public service. Some of us still work here because we have to. And that's the case across the board in the world of business.

I have a lot more to say, but I have a couple of colleagues who also want to speak. So I'm going to withdraw from the debate at this point and simply say that this bill does not make any provisions for the 60% to 70% of Ontarians without any pension. It simply addresses people who have pensions now. So as usual, the government has forgotten to take into consideration most Ontario taxpayers in this bill. Going forward, we have to make provisions for more pension benefits for everybody out there, and that will be a function of the private sector.

0910

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm pleased to speak to this on third reading. Of course, the government, with its heavy fist, in its typical ham-fisted manner, marched in the jackboots and imposed time allocation on this legislation, notwithstanding that it's an important issue for a whole lot of Ontarians.

It's interesting to follow the member for Thornhill, because I take his comments very seriously. The reality is that people in this chamber do not have a defined benefit pension because they voted it away in 1996. It was a unanimous vote by all three parties. There wasn't a single member who stood up and voted against the Harris proposition, because it seemed politically attractive at the time. At the end of the day, I don't think it earned anybody a single vote or lost anybody a single vote, but that's what happens when you have knee-jerk policy decisions like that one of Mr. Harris's.

But we do have a defined contribution pension plan. Most of the folks in this province have no pension plan whatsoever—none. They have eligibility for old age security when they reach 65. If they worked, they have eligibility for the Canada pension plan, but even this discussion around CPP is a little bit of a red herring, because a whole lot of folks don't have CPP.

Who are these people? A whole lot of new Canadians who arrive in this country in their 30s or 40s and who only start working in Canada then, acquiring CPP credits, if you will. A whole lot of those people are under-employed, because many of them are well-trained professionals who aren't working at the professional level that they should be, something in which the province of Ontario has failed new Canadians miserably. Others are in low-wage jobs. I think of staff at hotels. As you know, there's an organizing bid and an ongoing struggle with hotel cleaning staff. The union here is active in advocating for these people. A whole lot of them are new Canadian people. A whole lot of them are women, working very, very hard for very low wages. Here they are: They've got the double, triple whammy of starting work in Canada at a later age than most, earning low wages and doing the kind of work—the government eliminated the mandatory retirement age. A lot of help that does a cleaning person in a hotel who is flipping mattresses a

dozen times a day as well as cleaning other people's toilets and bathtubs. That's hard physical work, and the reality is that you see very few 70- or 75-year-old cleaning staff in hotels. That's the reality of it. Here we have this other group of people who have CPP but their CPP amounts to a pittance.

Then, again, although it's changing now, we've had historically the issue of women. In the 1950s, when I grew up, women worked but nowhere near as often as they do now. Women then tended to stay home and work very hard. It's not that they didn't work. They worked very, very hard, maintaining their households, caring for their children, taking care of a husband, perhaps taking care of a senior parent—all unpaid work, so not a penny of contribution to the Canada pension plan. We have a huge number of women in their mature years, in their senior years, who have no CPP eligibility, notwithstanding that they've worked hard all of their lives. They might have some modest survivor benefits; if they were single moms, they got nothing. The 65-year eligibility for old age security is not much of a milestone because it's a very, very modest amount.

In fact, in all of our constituency offices we talk to folks in their senior years who are living on less than \$12,000, less than \$10,000 a year. That's a tragedy, because it's not as if these people were in any way lazy or slothful or indifferent as to whether or not they had a job or an income, or living off the proceeds of crime. These were hard-working people, women and men, who had the misfortune of being in careers or jobs, doing work, where one had no CPP eligibility. Again, CPP is better than a kick in the head, but the amount that one receives on CPP even at the maximum level is hardly sufficient in the view of the vast majority of people to enable one to live with any level of decency or dignity.

Now we have fewer and fewer workers who are working because we have fewer and fewer workers who are in unionized jobs. This government, the McGuinty government, scuttled at least 300,000 or more jobs—gone. These were the good jobs, these were the manufacturing jobs, these are the wealth-creating jobs, these were the value-added jobs; and they tended to be unionized jobs, like—and I'll say it again—the 900 workers down at John Deere in Welland. John Deere had been there a hundred years: unionized shops, CAW—Canadian Auto Workers. A very skilled workforce: Men and women who worked very, very hard and produced some great product, but their jobs are gone. And many of them have replaced those jobs with jobs that are non-union, jobs with much lower wages, jobs without any pension plan whatsoever; or they're in contract work where they're effectively self-employed.

I suppose if one's making \$110,000 or \$150,000—what do people make here, \$120,000 a year or more?—it's easy to talk about saving money for retirement when you're making that kind of income. But when your family is living on \$25,000 a year—and there are a whole lot of families living on \$25,000 a year and less here in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario—it's not so easy to talk about saving money.

An RRSP means very little to a family that's supporting itself on \$25,000 or \$30,000, or less. If you've got two or three kids, that money is gone like that; that money is gone in a New York minute. The tax-free savings account is being touted in the economic pages as a real bargain. That's the one where the feds will let you put \$5,000 a year into a savings account or, as I understand it, any other similar investment and let you earn the income tax-free. Well, I'm sorry, if you're eking by on \$20,000, \$25,000, \$30,000, \$35,000 or even \$40,000 a year, the prospect of putting \$5,000 a year of after-tax money into a savings account so you can earn a 1%-a-year interest rate isn't a reality. It's not an option; it's not a choice.

We've got folks down at Atlas Steel—there are still workers who are ex-workers of Atlas Steel—who were ripped off as a result of a grossly underfunded pension plan and because the pension benefits guarantee fund remains capped at \$1,000 a month of pension replacement. These workers, these former workers, who otherwise would have had pensions of, I don't know, \$2,000, \$2,500, \$3,000 a month—again, not a whole lot of money—are reduced to \$1,000 a month. There's no Nortel buyout for them. There's no GM buyout or Stelco pension fund buyout for them. These Atlas Steel workers got left out there, twisting in the wind. They got hung and dried.

0920

I suppose what's most disappointing about this legislation—and New Democrats are going to support it, again, because it's better than a kick in the head, but not much—is the failure of this government to respond to the Arthurs recommendation that the pension benefits guarantee fund be set at a cap of \$2,500 a month. It's the most modest of proposals. It protects hard-working women and men from the voracious profit appetites of corporations—increasingly multinational corporations—that would rather skim off the top than adequately fund a pension plan.

And what's remarkable—if the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Mr. Miller, were here, he'd be inclined to tell you about the scenario in Stelco, where the fat cats, the top guys, got buyouts of six-digit and perhaps seven-digit figures. It's like the old adage: The bosses get the mine and the workers get the shaft, huh? And they got the shaft. People expect their government to come to their assistance, to come to their aid, to support them in scenarios like this.

New Democrats feel that the government has a responsibility to ensure that there's a legislative regime that supports adequate pensions for all workers. That's why the New Democrats—Andrea Horwath and the NDP—have advocated for an Ontario pension fund, one which would have all workers, regardless of the size of their workplace—because it's understandable. It's very difficult for an employer in a two- or three-person workplace. It's very expensive for that employer and those workers to participate in a pension fund. But if you had an Ontario-wide pension fund, sponsored provincially so that

all workers and all employers could participate, even the smallest workforce could participate in it—even a one- or two-person workforce; even the family-run, mom-and-pop business could participate in it. What a novel idea.

It has already been noted that people are living longer. It has already been noted over the course of the last weeks and months that this province is making life more expensive. Eighty-six per cent of Ontarians say that it's harder to get by now than it was two years ago. And in response to that, what does the Premier of this province do? What does Premier McGuinty do? He tells Ontarians, he promises them, that they're going to enjoy at least a 46% increase in their electricity rates over the next five years. And that's on top of the tax-grab HST created by Mr. McGuinty and his government; that's on top of so-called not-so-smart, stupid, dumber-and-dumber meters that are jacking up hydro rates for almost every hydro user, electricity user, here in the province of Ontario.

Folks haven't seen nothing yet, because we're just starting to get into the cold season. That furnace motor's going to be running hours a day, and the colder it gets, the longer it's going to be running. If people have had their socks knocked off by hydro rates so far, just wait until January and February coming. Our constituency offices are going to be flooded—as if they haven't been already—flooded with people whose singular comment is going to be, "I simply can't afford to pay it. The well is dry, and I can't not heat my house. The well is dry." So Premier McGuinty and the Liberals have made life more expensive for Ontarians and have effectively promised to make it even more expensive over the years to come. Yet they implicitly, in their failure to address the real pension issue in the province of Ontario, are telling people, "Well, if you want to survive through your senior years, save your money."

It's easy, once again, for a member of this Legislature making well into a six-digit income to talk about saving your money. For the life of me, I can't think of how you can tell that mom working at the 7-Eleven, on her feet all day, raising her three kids on a wage that's barely above minimum wage—and Lord knows, I don't know how she does it. She does it with a whole lot of sacrifice. She does it by doing without so that her kids don't have to, and even the kids do without. These are the kids who don't take money to pizza day at their elementary school. These are the kids who can't afford to participate in extracurriculars, sports programs, athletic programs. These are the kids who don't get to go to dance lessons or piano lessons or guitar lessons. These are the kids who don't get to go to a summer camp for a mere week, or maybe two.

How does that woman save for her retirement? She doesn't. She's probably too busy right now, that single mom raising three kids, working at a 7-Eleven. Or maybe working one of the hotels in Niagara Falls, as I said before, cleaning rooms—honourable work, but darned hard work, you better believe it, and not very well-paying, not well-paying at all—and abusive work. Or maybe she's working in the service industry, oh, the much-

touted tourism industry. Maybe she's a server, a waitress, dare I say it, who's having her tips ripped off by a boss because this government won't pass the legislation proposed by the member for Beaches—East York, Michael Prue, that would forbid restaurant bosses and bar bosses from stealing their servers', their waiters', their waitresses', their bartenders' tips. Maybe she cleans other people's houses. Maybe she works hard and is trusted and respected by people who can afford the proverbial cleaning lady. She doesn't have a pension plan. She doesn't have a defined benefit pension plan, she doesn't have a defined contribution pension plan and she sure as heck doesn't have any savings.

So while this legislation provides some modest tinkering, some of which has been sought by the labour movement, it in no way, shape or form addresses the crisis around retirees, seniors and poverty, the crisis around the decline of unionized jobs, the crisis around the movement to eliminate defined benefit pension plans. And increasingly, we're going to see in workplaces dual systems: Long-standing workers will have defined benefit pension plans; new hires will be forced into a defined contribution pension plan, which, again, is not much of a pension plan at all. There's no guarantee of any result, and you're subject to the vagaries of the stock market. Lord knows; look what the last two years have done to a whole lot of people's savings, including modest mutual fund holders.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Applause.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I'm pleased to stand in the House today for third reading of Bill 120, the Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010. Of course, I want to thank my colleague the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities for that warm welcome this morning. Thank you, Minister.

This act is just one part of our government's comprehensive plan. It's a plan to improve Ontario's retirement income system, to strengthen employment pension plans and to do this through both modernization and innovation. Our government has been very active on this file in the past few years, and we're taking significant steps in order to make retirement easier for the people of Ontario.

We continue to work with our federal, provincial and territorial partners to make significant improvements to Canada's retirement income system. Thanks to urging by Premier McGuinty, the Council of the Federation endorsed the idea of a national summit on Canada's retirement income system. The federal, provincial and territorial finance ministers are now developing options for reform and are going to discuss these options at the upcoming finance ministers' meeting of December 19 and 20. As you're aware, we're calling for a modest, fully funded, phased-in expansion to the Canada pension plan, along with tax and regulatory changes, in order to expand the range of institutions that can act as pension plan administrators, and to extend the plan coverage to a broader range of people, which would include, of course, the self-employed.

Such changes could also help lower the cost of providing defined contribution plans. To further this goal, we recently released a discussion paper called Securing Our Retirement Future: Consulting with Ontarians on Canada's Retirement Income System. It outlines the challenges facing Ontarians and, of course, all Canadians who are seeking a stable, secure retirement income, and the options that are available to them. Through this discussion paper, we're soliciting even more input from the people of Ontario on reforming the pension and retirement income system.

Furthermore, in May of this year, the House unanimously passed Bill 236, the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010. It built upon the recommendations from the Expert Commission on Pensions and upon extensive consultations with stakeholders that will help the pension system adapt to the economic changes while, at the same time, balancing the need for benefit security.

The government has been clear from the outset that Bill 236 was the first part of a multi-step process to update and to improve the employment pension system. This is a point we reiterated in the 2010 budget, and we committed to introducing further pension reforms. So Bill 120, the Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010, is the continuation of this process.

This proposed legislation builds on the principles of the 2010 budget and recommendations from the Expert Commission on Pensions. It also reflects consultations with stakeholders, discussions with members of the Canadian Institute of Actuaries and, of course, input that was provided from the Advisory Council on Pensions and Retirement Income.

A number of the proposed reforms would be phased in so that plan sponsors, administrators and other stakeholders would have time to adjust. Regulatory amendments would be required to implement many of the proposed changes to the Pension Benefits Act.

As you know, the McGuinty government is committed to maintaining an open and transparent process. Therefore, any draft regulations developed would be posted on the regulatory registry for review by stakeholders.

I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight what proposed reforms in the Securing Pensions Now and for the Future Act would accomplish. If passed, and once required regulations are drafted, consulted on and implemented, the legislation would lay the groundwork for modernizing funding rules, including strengthening required contributions. Strengthening funding rules would ensure plans are better positioned to withstand market risks.

The bill also provides for an improved framework for contribution holidays. If an ongoing plan is in surplus, with more assets than liabilities, excess assets may be used to offset contributions for the current service costs of funding ongoing pension accruals. When a plan is using surplus to reduce or suspend such contributions, it's taking what we call a contribution holiday.

Current rules do not require disclosure when a contribution holiday is under way. The commission stated that

information about contribution holidays is essential for an understanding of plan funding, both for the regulator and for all plan participants. That's why we're proposing to expressly permit contribution holidays, unless prohibited by the plan document, only if they do not reduce the plan's transfer ratio below a prescribed level.

The bill would also accelerate the funding of benefit improvements. In its report, the Expert Commission on Pensions noted that current rules permit benefit improvements to be funded over 15 years. It suggested instead that they should be fully identified and funded not just fully, but promptly. To improve benefit security, the government has proposed that benefit improvements be funded over no more than eight years on an ongoing concern basis.

Bill 120 would also clarify surplus entitlement. In its report, the commission observed that employers, active members and retirees have been engaged in conflicts over surplus use and distribution since at least the mid-1980s. Reform is needed to address long-standing debates about surplus entitlement and the costly litigation that often results.

To address surplus entitlement issues, the government is proposing to provide more legal certainty and a binding arbitration process for surplus distribution on plan windup, while continuing to allow payment to an employer where there is entitlement or a surplus-sharing agreement. The government is also proposing to allow payment of surplus from an ongoing plan to an employer where there is entitlement or consent, provided the remaining surplus is no less than the greater of 25% of windup liabilities and twice the current service costs plus 5% of windup liabilities.

Finally, to address surplus entitlement issues, we are proposing to ensure surplus rights are protected after asset transfers related to plan splits or mergers by requiring surplus-sharing agreements if the plan terms differ, if and when a successor plan is wound up. Of course, details would be set out in regulation.

We're also proposing to modify funding requirements for the multi-employer pension plan or MEPP and the jointly sponsored pension plans or the JSPPs that meet specific criteria. The commission had this to say: "MEPPs and JSPPs should be allowed more flexibility in funding," and they cited joint governance, risk sharing, the ability to reduce benefits and the absence of pension benefits guarantee fund coverage as legitimate reasons for different funding rules.

Acknowledging these distinctions, this bill proposes to provide a framework for MEPPs that offers target benefits. They would be exempt from solvency funding requirements, provided certain criteria are met, including an unrestricted ability to reduce accrued benefits in their plans.

Also, it proposes to allow target benefit plans that are exempt from solvency funding requirements to reduce benefit levels to the greater of the transfer ratio or going concern ratio when individual members choose to transfer the commuted value of their pension benefits out of

an underfunded plan. This would, of course, also require amendments to the regulations.

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As you know, this government has been working hard to make the pension benefits guarantee fund, or the PBGF, more sustainable. Since 1980, Ontario's PBGF has provided pensioners and plan members with a degree of benefit protection when plans are wound up with insufficient funds to cover promised benefits. Generally, the fund provides a maximum benefit top-up of up to \$1,000 per month.

The commission recommended that the PBGF be self-financing. Current PBGF assessments are as low as \$1 per plan member per year, with no minimum assessment per pension plan. So to place the PBGF on a more sustainable financial footing, we're proposing a strategy that recognizes the need for participation by all stakeholders. This strategy would increase the PBGF revenue by making assessments more consistent for the covered plans with, of course, similar funding levels and raising assessment levels by making changes to regulations. The strategy would implement stronger funding rules to reduce the risk and size of pension deficits in covered pension plans.

The Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010, also proposes to further modernize the pension system in Ontario, as recommended in the commission's report. If passed, the bill would provide more flexibility. It would provide opportunities for plan innovation by allowing employers to use irrevocable letters of credit from a financial institution to cover a portion of solvency special payments; allowing payment of variable benefits from defined contribution plans; and allowing flexible defined benefit pension plans, as permitted by the federal Income Tax Act.

It would strengthen regulatory oversight as well, by granting the superintendent the power to appoint a new administrator in certain circumstances.

It would improve plan administration by allowing reasonable expenses to be paid from the pension fund, unless prohibited by the plan documents.

Finally, we recognize that the absence of pension reform in Ontario for decades was unacceptable. This bill therefore includes a proposal that the Minister of Finance be required to initiate a review of the Pension Benefits Act every five years, and this is essential for the well-being of Ontario's retirees and those who are working towards retirement.

We've undertaken exhaustive public consultations in crafting this bill. The Minister of Finance conducted a series of round-table discussions on pension reform. On August 26, we posted the draft of this bill on our website and invited stakeholders and the public to provide feedback. We also received feedback at committee hearings.

It's feedback from people like Ian McSweeney, a partner with Osler, Hoskin and Harcourt, who had this to say: "The Ontario government, in my view, is to be commended for its significant efforts to put forward much-needed pension reform in a number of areas in the 2008

Arthurs report; one which intended to promote the objectives in that report, which included better securing pensions to deliver the pension promise, clarifying surplus rules, improving plan administration, reducing compliance costs and strengthening regulatory oversight."

We also received feedback from people like Derek Dobson, who is the CEO and plan manager of the pension plan for the college system in Ontario, also known as the CAAT pension plan. Mr. Dobson had this to say: "The changes proposed in Bill 120 align with the focus of our pension plan...: long-term sustainability; appropriate contributions for benefits being earned; minimizing contribution rate volatility; ...intergenerational equity ... open communication and disclosure."

Finally, I'd like to conclude with the thoughts of Betty Ann Bushell. She's treasurer of the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada. In committee hearings, we heard Ms. Bushell state—she had this to say to us in committee: "This is a legacy issue. It's up to this Legislature to leave the people of Ontario in a much better position in terms of their retirement and pensions than they are now, and I would urge you to do it well and do it with long-term thoughts in your minds."

If passed, Bill 120, the Securing Pension Benefits Now and for the Future Act, 2010, would do just that, and of course that's why I'm asking for the full support of the House to pass Bill 120.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have an opportunity to speak for a few minutes on third reading of Bill 120, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010. I know that the member from Durham also is keen to speak to this bill—it's an area that he's quite interested in—so I will be fairly brief.

The parliamentary assistant went over quite a few of the details of the bill. We are supporting the bill. It's mainly to do with defined benefit pension plans, as she pointed out in her speech, some relatively minor changes.

The member from Thornhill pointed out that there is still 60% or 70% of people out there who are not saving enough for their retirement income, and that's a big problem that does still need to be dealt with, either at the national level—most preferably at the national level.

I would like to just briefly talk about this bill in terms of the process, the fact that we did propose some amendments. Unfortunately, we wonder why we do them, as the opposition, at times because our track record of getting any of them passed doesn't seem to be very good. But we did listen to those groups that came before the committee at committee hearings and proposed some amendments.

One in particular was to do with target benefits. There was an excellent presentation from Buck Consultants, wanting to expand the ability of different groups to be able to participate in target benefit pension plans. So we in fact moved an amendment that would—the exact amendment was, "I move that paragraph 2 of subsection 39.2(1) of the Pension Benefits Act, as set out in

subsection 12(1) of the bill, be amended by striking out ‘one or more collective agreements’ at the end and substituting ‘collective agreements or other prescribed agreements.’” The purpose of that was to expand the target benefit plans to not just unionized groups but any group out there that wanted to form a prescribed agreement.

The Buck presentation talked about how defined benefit plans aren’t working for most private sector employees. The future liability of them is—the reality is, private sector employees are—fewer and fewer are providing defined benefit plans, especially for new hires. Defined contribution plans aren’t working for most employees. A defined contribution plan is what members of the Ontario Legislature in fact have, where they contribute a portion of their income each month, where it’s a defined contribution plan which is invested in RRSPs.

The new sort of idea that’s come out is target benefit plans. They’re a solution to increase pension plan coverage to Ontario workers. That’s why we proposed an amendment that would expand who could participate in target benefit plans, as was recommended by the presentation done by Buck Consultants at committee. Unfortunately, the government voted that amendment down.

We also proposed an amendment to provide more timely information for the plan users. The Canadian Federation of Pensioners, who are hundreds of thousands of people across the province, pointed out that if things go bad in their pension plan, the current requirement is a three-year valuation, and there are six months to do it, so it can be almost four years by the time they find out the bad news, like the 2008 bad news, for example.

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They were asking, as many other pension plans do have now, with modern technology and electronic means of doing these things, for an annual valuation. We did propose an amendment to do with that, to bring more timely information to those retired plan members; that was also voted down by the government.

We also proposed, as recommended by one of the presenters, that the too-big-to-fail rules be struck out so that the rules would apply to all companies in the same way and so we would not have special exemptions and holidays on contributions by the large companies, because it has been proven in recent history that it doesn’t matter how big the company is, whether it’s General Motors or Stelco, they can all get in trouble, so there shouldn’t be special rules for the large companies.

I just wanted to get those amendments that we proposed on the record. I just note that we will be supporting Bill 120 when it comes to a vote. Thank you very much for the time to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John O’Toole: It’s a pleasure to speak again on Bill 120 and to follow our critic Mr. Miller, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I thank him for allowing me such an inordinate amount of time.

The key here is that pensions continue to be an important part of, I would say, the social security plan of all

Canadians and all Ontarians. In fact, the whole issue of pensions has broad implications for not just Ontario. In fact, the expert panel that met prior to Bill 236, the first act, was an admission that pension plans, generally, were in serious trouble.

When you look at it, a lot of the attention being brought to this is at the federal level as well. I commend Minister Flaherty for convening a meeting last winter around this time—in Whitehorse, I think—and also for the current discussions that are going on federally. In fact, some of the discussions that are going on are about looking at the CPP, the Canada pension plan, and trying to fix the system for all people, because I think the most important place to start here, not just on Bill 120, is to realize that about 70% of the people living in Ontario, probably in Canada, don’t have a pension except for the Canada pension and OAS plan, and that’s quite frightening.

If you look, also, widely, most people don’t take advantage of the RRSP, the registered retirement savings plan, which is a tax shelter, if you will, for ordinary Canadians. Also, there’s another part of savings, which is saving for your children’s education: the educational savings plan.

There was an article the other day about people not wanting to save. I can attest that even in my own family, my own children—all well employed—don’t like to save. Saving for the future seems to be something that they did long ago, and it seems to have run out of style. Now, one doesn’t wonder too long why, because the way the monetary system globally is now, you’d wonder what you should be saving in: dollars or gold? You look at gold reaching an all-time high. There’s uncertainty in the whole equation here.

Governments are trying to settle that discussion down, trying to allay suspicions that there is a monetary crisis. In fact, there is. Today, China upped their interest rate, which is one of the monetary policies that any government has—to manipulate money supply through interest or supply of currency itself. The United States is resolved to this, and Bernanke—I heard him speak last week on a cable show. He was saying that they’re going to expand the supply of money again by another \$600 billion, which really deflates the currency that’s in circulation.

What would a person say then? If you’re saving in dollars, would you not want to save in a currency that’s going to be growing as opposed to shrinking? I’m not sure I would want my currency saved in euros, given what’s going on in Europe.

It is tied to some very complex things. I’ve read quite a bit. I understand some of what I read, but it’s a complicated topic. I always looked at it from my constituents’ perspective. What are the three criteria that you look at when you look at pensions? And the actuaries themselves have a kind of formula that looks at pensions. It’s a pot of money that people have set aside. It’s invested generally quite securely and conservatively. That pot of money has got some rules around it. Usually, it’s based on your entitlements or based on a couple of factors—return on equity, which is usually in the range of 5% to 7%. Really,

that isn't happening today. It also is ranged on the type of organizations you work for—the portability. When you look at General Motors, Nortel, Stelco, all of those legacy companies are basically bankrupt because of pension liabilities.

The third thing they look at is the number of people paying into a plan. Often, companies are outsourcing, downsizing, globalizing, and there's no security in terms of the organization themselves.

So, plans and who underwrites them when these companies fall off the cliff—we found out in the case of General Motors, the government itself at all levels, US and Canadian and provincial governments, had to come in and fix things up.

It does raise the question, are the rules strong enough? If you look at the current finance bill that's before us, which will be debated this afternoon, Bill 135 has some language in there that deals with the issue of derivatives and other forms of saving and investing. The reason I bring this up is this bill, which we support, does go a long way to recognizing some of the commitments made by the expert panel. You would know that that basically happened some time ago. The expert panel was pre-Bill 236. It was the first bill that came into effect, and I think it was in May 2010. This bill, Bill 120, came into effect on October 19 in first reading, second reading on the 4th, and now we're into the third and final reading and it's sort of time-allocated.

I thank and compliment the parliamentary assistant. She has worked tirelessly on this attempt to understand this complex issue.

The member from Kitchener-Conestoga did remark on some of the things that Bill 120 does. That bill actually does a couple of things, and one of them I'm concerned about is this whole idea of contribution holidays. That's quite controversial, because contribution holidays are a case where the plan exceeds a certain amount of actuarial value. That's risk and reward analysis. I don't think there should be a contribution holiday. That's my own belief.

So there are sections in this bill that I think the experts have clearly commented on. I have an article here from Benefits Canada, and I have another article here that was passed on to me by the pension benefit law—Osler, Hoskin and Harcourt. It was referred to by several people. I've read their papers well.

Anyway, it's a bill that we support and—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. Further debate? Seeing none, pursuant to the order of the House dated November 3, 2010, I am now required to put the question.

Ms. Smith has moved third reading of Bill 120, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until after question period today.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day?

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 30, 2010, on the motion relating to negotiations with the federal government on a comprehensive new agreement to provide funding, planning, and governance for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

There being no further debate, on September 28, 2010, Mr. Hoskins moved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognizes that Ontario receives, welcomes and benefits from the contributions of nearly half of all new immigrants coming to Canada and calls on the federal government to support the integration of newcomers and the economic recovery in Ontario by investing in services for newcomers and therefore asks the federal government to fulfill their commitment under the recently expired five-year Canada-Ontario immigration agreement to spend the outstanding \$207 million promised to Ontario's newcomers and immediately commence negotiations on a comprehensive new agreement that provides the adequate funding, planning, and governance necessary for immigrants to succeed and for Ontario to prosper.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The vote shall be deferred until deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We have no further business, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1001 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's a privilege for me to introduce two individuals in the Speaker's gallery this morning: Mrs. Alma Fell, who is the grandmother of our page from Peterborough, Jake Fell, and Mrs. Fell's very good family friend, Ms. Mae Goodwyn.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I ask all members to join me in welcoming the staff, students and volunteers from Walter E. Harris in Oshawa.

Mr. David Caplan: It's a real pleasure to have the family of page Miguel Agudelo here today: his mother, Lucia Henao, and his father, Miguel Agudelo. Welcome to Queen's Park on behalf of the Legislature.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I would like, at this time, to welcome a couple of visitors from my riding, Les Armstrong

and George Fortin, attending from the riding of Sarnia-Lambton.

Mr. John O'Toole: I would like to welcome to the Legislature—they are not here yet, but they are coming—Aubrey and Debra Zidenberg.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Seated in the Speaker's gallery this morning, I'd like to welcome some guests of mine: Brent Davis, Sam Davis, Lucy Gouveia and Kyle Gouveia, and from my constituency office, Veronika Sonier, Megan Trotter, Craig Bradford and Kim Davis, and Kim's grandson and my good friend, Kristian Young. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Families don't need the Provincial Auditor to tell them there is something wrong with their property assessments. Under Premier McGuinty, all they had to do was simply open up the bill. But now, the auditor confirmed exactly what Ontario families have known instinctively: that up to one in eight could be paying more than 20% too much in their property taxes.

I ask the minister, is Premier McGuinty simply too tired to fix MPAC? Or is he resisting change because he likes to rake in all of that extra money from overvalued property assessments?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: First of all, we welcome the Auditor General's report and the recommendations he has made with respect to MPAC.

I would remind the Leader of the Opposition that MPAC is actually controlled by municipalities. I've had a chance to chat with the new chair of MPAC, who is the mayor of Stratford—an outstanding mayor, I might add. MPAC has already acted on the recommendations in many instances.

Again, just so that there's a complete understanding, the auditor also pointed out that as a result of these discrepancies, many people paid less. This is an ongoing challenge with assessment, and we look forward to the board of MPAC addressing the specific recommendations of the Auditor General.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: That is cold comfort, Minister, to the people who are paying up to 20% more for their property assessments because you just can't get your act right. Now the minister wants to blame municipalities.

Minister, this falls on your desk. You are the Minister of Finance, and you know the Ombudsman raised similar concerns four years ago. In March 2006, the Ombudsman said, "MPAC is not concerned enough about problems it has encountered in ensuring the accuracy of its information." I asked you directly four years ago and you said you would fix the problem. You said MPAC has already responded. You said, "We're moving forward,"

and you said you were happy to have the Ombudsman's report—the exact same answers you just gave me here today.

Minister, are you asleep on the job? Or are you just using four-year-old talking points and not getting to the bottom of the problem?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'd rather let the Ombudsman answer the leader's question. The leader is right: In his 2006 report there were a number of recommendations. According to the Ombudsman in his 2009-10 report, "All ... recommendations have now been implemented."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Ontario families know that the McGuinty government has become awfully tired in office. They keep seeing the same scandals come back over and over again.

Four years ago, you were warned of problems at MPAC, and then you went to sleep on the job.

But this isn't the only circumstance. The minister knows that his smart meters are badly broken, but you force them on families anyway. Fraudsters are driving up the cost of auto insurance, but you raise rates instead of cracking down on the cheaters.

To add insult to injury, you move the dream of home ownership farther away from middle-class families by slapping down your HST on new homes and renovations. Now we see property assessments 20% or more too high, but you won't fix them, and you're going to pocket the difference.

Why is it you see Ontario families as nothing more than cash machines for Dalton McGuinty's runaway spending?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would remind the honourable member about the use of names. We use titles, ministries or ridings.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The other thing the Ombudsman pointed out in his 2009-10 report is that there had been a 90% decrease in the complaints, resultant from the changes we made.

The MPAC board is already in the process of responding to the auditor's recommendations. We will continue to work with him.

But I have to say, the only thing in this House that's broken is that leader's leadership. We don't know if it's the Lanark landowners who are asking questions or if it's the old red Tory wing of the party. We've been waiting for an energy plan from that party. They haven't—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order. Speaker Claus has started his list; there's three on it already.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We've been waiting for an energy plan from them, and we haven't gotten one. Now we know why: They're too busy fighting one another over who's in charge.

We've laid out a plan for a better energy future. We will respond to the Ombudsman's recommendations on MPAC and build a stronger province as a result of it.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Minister of Finance: Minister, moms and dads in Ontario today are struggling to make ends meet. You've hit them with the HST, hydro bills are going through the roof, and many of them would simply love the opportunity to buy their son or daughter a Wii or an iPod this Christmas. But to read the auditor's report, the McGuinty Liberals, through MPAC, are handing them out like candy.

Where is your sense of outrage? Why aren't you pounding on your desk saying you're going to put a stop to the problems at MPAC instead of shrugging your shoulders and looking the other way? This has gone on for far too long. Are you that far out of touch? Have you lost that much gas? Are you that tired that you look the other way when they're giving out the Wiis and iPods that families are struggling to buy their own kids for Christmas?

Minister, how did you get so out of touch?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the honourable member from Peterborough and the Minister of Community Safety that that list is going both ways on both sides of the House.

Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We welcome the auditor's recommendations and I will point out—

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I will point out that, in fact, that practice was put to an end almost a year and a half ago, once we became aware of it. I'll table a letter with the House from the CEO of MPAC saying that those expenses no longer happen as a result of this government's policy and directives with respect to appropriate procedures.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, I want to say to the minister responsible for Nintendo Wiis and iPods that those answers simply don't cut it when you have one in eight homes whose assessments are out of whack by 20% or more, and all you do is shrug your shoulders. You wash your hands and you walk away while scandal after scandal happens under Premier McGuinty's watch—from eHealth, to MPAC, to the OLG.

Premier McGuinty once famously said after eHealth that he fixed the rules. There would be no more sweetheart deals. He said there would be no more expense scandals, but now the auditor found out that almost half of the contracts at MPAC were untendered contracts, were sweetheart deals up to \$50 million a year. When will you actually stop talking about making change and make real change? Or do we have to change the government—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

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Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have brought about substantial change, and let's review a little bit of—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Honourable members, please come to order. Stop the clock.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Peterborough, a comment like that is not helpful.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, government House leader, it's not.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's right, two more sleeps.

Please continue.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Leader of the Opposition is right: We've brought about substantial change, and let me tell you where we started.

First of all, we applied freedom of information to Hydro One and OPG, and what did we discover when we did that? We found untendered contracts to Tory friends in the hundreds of thousands, indeed millions, of dollars.

We found that not only did that government have relatively minor expense challenges, they also had a box at the Air Canada Centre where a number of his colleagues were entertained quite lavishly. We got rid of that.

I read the *Globe and Mail*, I think it was Saturday morning, about Niagara tourism, and lo and behold, on page 1, who was the minister at the time who oversaw that challenge? It was the now Leader of the Opposition.

They've got no plan, no—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier McGuinty said that the practice of untendered contracts would end, but it keeps happening over and over again. Nobody is ever fired. Nobody is ever demoted. Nobody has any consequences. And as a result, the McGuinty legacy of waste is vast and growing deeper still.

Almost 50% of the contracts given out were untendered contracts. We saw money given out for Wii consoles and iPods and up to \$50 million in untendered contracts.

You said it would stop. You said you'd stop it four years ago. The Premier said it would stop. It keeps happening over and over again.

You've run out of gas. You've lost touch. You've lost every opportunity to actually make change. The only way to bring change is to change this government and get rid of the legacy of McGuinty waste.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We've built a legacy of change, and there's more change to come. And you know, we started last month.

Let's review what that leader and his party voted against. We brought in a bill to change lobbyist rules and regulations. That leader and his party voted against it. We brought in legislation and change to help people with their energy bills. That leader and his party voted against it. And we brought in real change to ensure that Ontarians have better health care and shorter wait times. That leader and his party voted against it.

This is a government that reformed what you did. There were no more Walkertons, no more Ipperwashes, no 10 million student days lost in education. That's the kind of change Ontarians voted for. They're going to get more real change as we build a better future for this province and this country.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

I think with all this excitement in the House, some of you may be very anxious to get home for the holiday season. I can assure you that the Speaker could help facilitate an early trip home.

New question.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Health. Yesterday's report by the Auditor General provided more evidence of an out-of-touch government with misplaced priorities. When it suits their political needs, this government can approve millions of dollars in infrastructure projects in a matter of mere weeks. But for the husband needing speedy treatment in an ER for his wife or the senior waiting for home care, it's been seven long years of empty promises.

Given the Auditor General's findings, does the minister still think that her government's plan is working?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Yes, our plan is absolutely working, and the auditor himself recognized it.

Let me quote from the auditor's report. This is on ERs, for example: "Our research indicated that outside Ontario, there has not been much public reporting of emergency department data in Canada." That's one thing he said. On page 8, he said, "Given the adage that 'you can't manage what you can't measure,' the ministry's decision to gather length-of-stay data and report it publicly is a good initiative." On page 3, he said that "the length of time patients with minor conditions waiting in emergency departments almost met the four-hour target...." Page 27: "Most EMS providers acknowledged that the program reduced ambulance offload times, freed up ambulances, and brought emergency departments and EMS providers together to improve offload delays."

Our wait times in emergency departments are coming down—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For seven long years people have heard the promises of this government, and yesterday, the Auditor General showed them the results: ER

wait times unimproved since 2008; 50,000 patients stranded in hospitals with nowhere to go; waiting lists for home care stretching up to 262 days, and in some communities, it's not available at all.

How can the health minister stand here with a straight face and claim that her government's plan is working when everybody knows that it is not?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We started measuring emergency department wait times in April 2008. Our baseline: 81% of people who went to emergency departments were seen, and their entire length-of-stay time was within the target. We started at 81%; we're now at 85%. We're on our way to have 90% of the patients who come to our emergency departments in and out of the emergency department within those target times.

We're making progress. We're not there yet; there is more to do, and we are doing that work. The recommendations that the Auditor General made actually reinforced that our strategies are the right strategies. We're starting to see results, and the results are impressive. Nearly half the hospitals in Ontario meet the four-hour target for the uncomplicated cases, and over one third of hospitals have met the eight-hour target.

We know we can do better. We're putting in place the right resources to do better.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The situation across Ontario is tragic. Last year, 50,000 people were left stranded in hospitals because there was simply no place for them to go. They were discharged but follow-up services simply are not available, and some languished in hospitals for up to 97 days more than necessary.

After all the rosy promises that this government has made, how can the McGuinty Liberals have allowed things to get this desperately bad?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I understand that the leader of the third party has a job to do, and that is to criticize the government. I understand that. I wish she would actually look at the facts, though.

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The truth is, we have made significant progress. When it comes to funding people through our CCACs, we've increased the number of people who are getting care; 200,000 more people now are getting care than when we took office. When it comes to spending in home care, we've increased spending by 64%. So we are very much focused on improving home care.

Our initiatives are showing results. The population is growing, the population is aging, and the investments we are making are making a difference. Is there more to do? Absolutely, and we are on track to continue the improvement in our health care system.

HOME CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Minister of Health for my second question: The Auditor General also reported that most regions of the province have a waiting

list for home care with 10,000 names on it. That's 10,000 families that are scrambling to help a relative waiting for support or, worse, visiting that relative in the hospital while others languish in the ER waiting for that bed. After seven years of big promises, is the government ready to admit that their home care system isn't working?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Far from it; far from it. Our initiatives are working. Let me tell you a story that might demonstrate how this is working. There's a gentleman here in Toronto named Keith Cooper, a wonderful gentleman. He was a paramedic; he's now a retired gentleman. He was living in a long-term-care home here in Toronto. Now Keith Cooper is living at home because of the investments in home care. He's living at home, and he has a personal support worker come and visit him twice a day. The space he took in the long-term care is now being occupied by someone who needs the full array of supports in a long-term-care home.

So bringing people from long-term care back into their own homes, with the right supports, is part of our strategy. It's working for Keith Cooper, and it's working for many, many thousands of people across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The auditor reports that our current system is a hodgepodge mess that's failing patients. In the absence of any standards, each region has its own criteria for how often and how long a client receives home care services. Some Ontarians are forced to wait eight days for home care; others wait 262 days. Does the minister think it's right for geography to be the main determinant of what health care services Ontarians receive?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We agree with the auditor that funding to CCACs should not be based on the historical spending, but rather on the needs in that community. That is why we are moving to use HBAM. It's a methodology that reflects the population age structure, the demographics and the need in that community. So we are making this transition. We agree with the auditor that that's the way to go in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The auditor has pointed to problems that should have been fixed long, long ago, and for seven years, patients have heard this government's promises, but they're still waiting in ERs for up to 26 hours, 50,000 patients who shouldn't be in hospital beds are trapped in them, and families that need home care beds for loved ones are waiting up to 262 days. After seven years of big promises, is the government ready to admit that their home care system is a shambles?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is a government that takes great pride in the work we have done in health care. We have rebuilt a crumbling system. Think back to before we were in office. There was a headline that said that 22 out of 25 hospitals in the GTA were on bypass. That meant an ambulance could not accept any patients. That was a crisis.

We are now moving forward. We've got a million more people attached to primary health care. We're now

measuring our wait times, and we're bringing those wait times down. We have virtually all our surgical procedures now meeting those wait time targets. Because we measure, we know what we need to do next. Our MRI wait times are not where we want them to be, so we're making new investments in MRIs.

The health care system is far, far stronger now than it was when we took office, and the member opposite really should recognize what the auditor did that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Health. Ontario families didn't need an auditor's report to know that there's something very wrong in Ontario's hospitals. One in six patients in hospital should not be there, but because they are, other patients wait 26 hours, sometimes longer, in crowded emergency rooms.

You said the LHINs and the \$200 million you spent to reduce ER wait times would fix the problem. The auditor says they're not. What more will it take to motivate this government to change and fix the mess Premier McGuinty has made of Ontario's hospitals?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said earlier, we are measuring the issues. We have a much better handle on what the problems are than any previous government did, let me tell you. We are leading the country when it comes to public reporting. Your party didn't even bother to measure wait times; our government is measuring wait times. We're publicly reporting wait times. The auditor acknowledges and congratulates us for doing that.

We have made strategic investments. Our health care system is far healthier now than it was when we took over, and there are many ways that we can demonstrate that. For a start, access to primary care: When we took office, the number one phone call we received in our offices, and I dare say, the number one phone call you received in yours, was from people desperate to get a family doctor—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: You can study and measure all you want, but the time for action is long past.

The auditor says half the triage diagnoses in Ontario hospitals are wrong. The media just reported that a 40-year-old woman suffocated to death while waiting for treatment in an emergency room. Tragedies like this happen because Premier McGuinty can't be bothered to fix the mess his LHINs have made of their efforts to coordinate patient flow in hospitals. Long-term-care patients are stranded in hospitals, while other patients can't even get in the door.

It's a moment of truth for the Premier's expensive LHIN experiments: They haven't gotten the job done. Will you change by scrapping the LHINs and put every last dollar back into front-line health care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The opposition has lots of bluster, but they have no plan. They have absolutely no plan. The only plan they have is to take \$3 billion out of front-line health care. Now, they can pretend that they can cut spending and improve care, but they cannot. If they can, if they come up with a plan that demonstrates how they can cut \$3 billion out of health care and improve care, I'll vote for them. I would love to see their plan.

But until they have a plan, until they have a plan to improve health care—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Oxford, member from Simcoe North: tick, tick.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. New question.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday's Auditor General report confirms there's something seriously wrong at the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., MPAC. The Auditor General's analysis of 11,500 assessments showed that an astonishing one in eight were off the mark by 20% or more. Assessments that are as much as 20%, 30% or 40% higher than they should be force some people, especially seniors, out of their homes.

Will the minister admit that MPAC is badly run, and when will he fix it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We welcome the Auditor General's reports, as we welcome the Ombudsman's report.

I remind the member opposite that MPAC is in fact controlled by our municipal partners. I know that they welcome the recommendations as well. I've spoken with the chair of MPAC, the mayor of Stratford; many of the recommendations of the auditor in this year's report have already been acted on. I think that's appropriate.

Again, we're always looking for ways to do things better, and that's why we take the auditor's recommendations seriously and have, in fact, already responded to many of them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: If the minister takes this issue seriously, why doesn't he take the fact that MPAC can't get assessments right seriously? It seems the management has no problem blowing thousands of public dollars on expensive meals and fancy gifts. Try explaining that to seniors forced out of their homes because of incorrect assessments that drive their taxes through the roof.

1100

Clearly, MPAC needs to be fixed. Will this minister, will this government, bring forward action to fix MPAC immediately?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Yes. I can report that all nine recommendations in the auditor's report have been accepted by MPAC, and a number have already been implemented. It is absolutely essential that we take these

recommendations seriously. I acknowledge the challenges associated with the auditor's findings, and I believe we've taken the appropriate steps, and the board has taken the appropriate steps to respond.

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Mr. David Orazietti: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Last week, the leader of the NDP was in Sault Ste. Marie speaking about energy. It's clear from her comments that they have no energy plan.

In contrast, we recently announced that the 27 towers being installed at the Pointe-aux-Roches wind farm in Essex county will be made with 100% Ontario steel from Sault Ste. Marie. Essar Steel Algoma provided over 4,600 metric tonnes of steel plate, valued at over \$3.5 million, to build the wind towers that will produce 49 megawatts of clean electricity in southwestern Ontario. Management at Essar Steel said they're beginning to see new business prospects open up, thanks to Ontario's commitment to building a clean energy economy.

Would the minister tell us if industry can expect to see more of these types of job-creating opportunities and investments in the green energy sector?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for Sault Ste. Marie for this question. I can tell him that this government will always stand up for investment in Ontario and jobs for Ontario workers as a result of our growing clean energy economy.

The announcement last week in Essex county is a great example of what our energy plan is all about: steel from Sault Ste. Marie, clean energy for Essex and jobs supported and created from the north to the south of this province.

Just last week, I had the pleasure of joining the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade to announce that Samsung and CS Wind's new tower manufacturing plant would be located there—towers, by the way, that are going to be made with 100% Ontario steel. Two thousand tonnes is the projected domestic steel consumption of that plant. That's worth \$140 million.

Those who have no plan like the leader of the NDP can oppose those investments. We're going to stand—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. David Orazietti: Job creation is important, and certainly these recent announcements are excellent news for Ontario workers and for the 3,200 employees at Essar Steel Algoma.

Like most Ontarians, I have a hard time understanding how anyone could oppose new jobs being created by building a clean energy economy. Nevertheless, when the leader of the NDP was in the Soo, she criticized new power generation.

The Brookfield wind farm, the Starwood solar farm, the Heliene Canada solar panel manufacturer, the Essar Steel cogen and the St. Marys Paper biomass cogen are diversifying Sault Ste. Marie's economy while creating over a thousand jobs.

Even though the NDP opposes the creation of these jobs in Sault Ste. Marie and across Ontario, will the provincial government continue to support these initiatives through its long-term energy plan?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Absolutely, absolutely. This government will continue to support the investment in job creation that comes with making Ontario a clean energy global powerhouse. I agree with the member: I cannot understand how the leader of the NDP continues to oppose those jobs in Sault Ste. Marie, those jobs in Windsor-Essex and this great opportunity for Ontario's steel industry.

Let me tell you what Ken Neumann, president of the United Steelworkers, said: "More new jobs in Ontario are just what Ontario families need. And helping build a cleaner tomorrow is just what workers want for their kids, too...."

"From Steelworkers making wind turbines to electricians installing solar panels, workers can support their families by working in clean energy."

There used to be a time when the NDP used to support those Steelworkers. They've lost their way. We're standing up for Steelworkers. They're standing against them. We're proud to stand with the Steelworkers of this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is to the Minister of Tourism. The news media have reported on the expenses of Joel Noden, formerly an executive at the Niagara Parks Commission. Did Mr. Noden ever pick up the expenses of any former Ministers of Tourism for meals, hospitality or even a single expense?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question. There is a long-standing corporate culture at the commission. This issue existed over successive governments. By the way, Mr. Joel Noden was hired 13 years ago.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: When Tim Hudak was the minister.

Hon. Michael Chan: In fact, this issue existed when the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister of Tourism. When the leader of that party was questioned about the complaints he received as tourism minister, his response was, "I don't have a recollection...." What he meant was that he did not have a plan. He did not have a clue.

On this side of the House we have a plan, a plan that has been in action since February of this year. We have a new chair and we have a new vice-chair. We see changes to the governance structure, the approval process, expenses and to the board and senior—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Surely with all the questions surrounding the emerging scandal at the Niagara Parks Commission, the minister will have been thoroughly

briefed. He should know. The question is simple and direct; the minister is compelled to answer. Did Mr. Noden's expenses ever include the meal, flight or alcohol expenses of a former minister, deputy minister or ministry staff?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question. Mr. Noden was hired by the PC government 13 years ago, and the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister of Tourism in 2001.

As I have said, the commission has had the same challenges over many successive governments. While the Conservative Party is engaging in partisan games, we are taking action. We are taking action to ensure that our agencies operate in a way that is more accountable and transparent to the people of Niagara and all Ontarians. But as we are moving forward with all this and changes to the commission, the opposition is playing political games. It makes you wonder when someone asks, are they afraid? Are they afraid of what is going to come out? Are they afraid that not being able to recollect complaints—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton: A question to the Acting Premier. Yesterday, the Auditor General reported that less than \$510 million, or 16%, of the \$3.1 billion allocated to three infrastructure programs was spent by the end of the first year. That means that only an estimated 7,000 jobs were created or saved, rather than the 44,000 that your government projected.

My question is this: How do you answer to the hundreds of thousands of unemployed Ontarians that the McGuinty Liberals spent only a fraction of the money that was available to help put them back to work?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First of all, we're in the midst of the largest and most significant infrastructure program in the history of the province of Ontario. The program stops on March 31, 2011, and the audit was completed up until March 31, 2010, so there's a lot of time to go.

The projects that are being completed are 98.9% complete by March 31. There are a very small number that are not completed. What is significant in what the auditor said—"We had a global economic crisis." In that context, we're applying \$28 billion in infrastructure, with 300,000 jobs created by the end of March 31 and 400,000 estimated by the Conference Board of Canada. Our numbers are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: What is bizarre about this is that at the same time that you're unable to get the money out the door to create and sustain jobs, on other projects, projects had virtually no assessment whatsoever. The

Auditor General says that some of these projects went forward without recommendations from officials in the ministries. "The haste made it 'virtually impossible' for the necessary review work to be done." So recommendations weren't obtained from officials in the field; ministerial staff simply decided on the back of an envelope what was going to be funded.

1110

How does the government explain the Wild West chaos that left some money unspent and other projects with virtually no recommendations to support them?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The process was very significant. There was tremendous due diligence that was done at the municipal level, provincial level and intergovernmental: federal and provincial. What we have are the exact words of the provincial Auditor General: "The responsible ministries devoted significant efforts to establish the appropriate systems and processes, and to adhere to ... reporting, and other accountability requirements."

As well, the federal and provincial Auditor Generals did not name a single project that should not have gone forward. The processes, in the words of the Auditor General, were appropriate—"accountability and transparency."

There were processes that needed to be improved. Our staff worked with the Auditor General. We're implementing all of the processes that need improvement. But at the end of the day—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. In March 2007, the federal government announced up to \$960 million in partnership with the province of Ontario and five municipalities, referred to as the Flow initiative. This initiative would generate a combined investment of close to \$4.5 billion in public transit and highway infrastructure projects. As part of the Flow initiative, the province of Ontario has committed to extend the 407 eastward from Brock Road to Highway 35/115.

The opposition has recently begun saying that the province is not living up to its agreement under the Flow initiative to extend the 407 to the 35/115. My constituents in Peterborough are telling me how important the extension of the 407 is to the region's economic well-being. The Highway 407 extension would provide a faster and easier option for my constituents to get through the Durham region into Toronto.

Minister, can you assure my constituents that the 407 will extend to the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to thank the member for Peterborough for his consistent advocacy on this.

We know how important the 407 extension is to the communities in the Durham, Peterborough and the

Kawartha regions. That's why we remain committed to completing Highway 407 through to Highway 35/115. We're going to do it in an affordable, responsible, manageable manner. We're going to build phase 1 to Simcoe Road, and the second phase will be built to 35/115.

Despite the economic challenges that we've confronted over the last couple of years, we're moving ahead with the extension of the 407. We recognize that it will serve the majority of residents. Projects of this size are consistently built in stages, as was the first part of the 407. It was built in stages; we're doing the same thing. We're starting with the busiest section first. We're going to get this road built.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary? The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Mr. Rick Johnson: Minister, it is good to know that we are proceeding with a plan. This staged implementation ensures long-term transportation objectives are protected so those improvements can be implemented when appropriate.

The Leader of the Opposition has been telling the residents in Durham, including my constituents, that they will make the extension "a priority." I find that interesting, because when the Leader of the Opposition is pressed for when his plan would be complete, he can't provide a date. I know that Conservatives don't have a plan for the 407, but local groups have expressed concern about the Simcoe Road termination.

Minister, can you please inform the House what your plan is?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask all members on both sides of the House that—the noise elevation has gotten a little loud. Even with my earpiece, I'm finding it difficult to hear both questions and answers. I would just remind members that if they want to have conversation amongst themselves, we have side lobbies that are available for both sides to utilize.

Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have a plan to build the 407 out to 35/115, and that plan does not include selling it off at a fire sale.

The Leader of the Opposition knows, I believe, that this road needs to be built in stages. I think he knows that because that's exactly what they did; they built the 407 in stages. They understand that that's how the 407 needs to be built.

We know that they don't have a plan. We know that because the MPP for Whitby–Ajax is saying that we're renegeing on the Flow agreement, but at the same time, the MPP for Oshawa is asking me about the properties MTO is acquiring to build the 407 to 35/115. If we weren't building to 35/115, we wouldn't be buying the properties along that corridor.

On this side of the House, we know that extending the 407 is essential to job creation and to economic growth. We have met with the mayors. I have met with the mayors in the region. We'll be working with them to make sure that the infrastructure is in place to make sure that it is a safe build.

ANTI-SEMITISM

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Jewish groups are criticizing the University of Toronto for accepting a shockingly anti-Semitic master's thesis. The Holocaust is a horrible chapter in human history that claimed the lives of six million Jews, yet this disgusting paper attacks educational programs working to ensure such evil is never repeated.

Minister, this House unanimously passed a resolution from the member from Thornhill condemning Israeli Apartheid Week. What are you doing as Minister of Citizenship to stop the rising tide of anti-Semitism?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I deeply appreciate the member opposite raising this. I too was greatly disturbed and, in fact, disgusted when I read the media reports. I want to say first and foremost that this government remains absolutely committed to fighting discrimination in all its forms. I want to add as well that the McGuinty government denounces all acts of anti-Semitism, which we believe are a particularly vile and pernicious form of discrimination, and we will continue our work to protect the human rights of our Jewish community and of all Ontarians.

I was proud that earlier this year, this Legislature in fact came together to condemn anti-Semitism on our university campuses, and we will continue our hard work on behalf of all Ontarians, including our Jewish community.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary? The member from Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I wish I could say that this hateful and poorly—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable members—this is an important issue that all members need to be able to hear clearly, and I'd appreciate not having the interjections.

Member from Thornhill?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I wish I could say that this hateful and poorly researched paper attacking programs that use the horrors of the Holocaust to somehow show the dangers of discrimination and racism by Jews was an isolated incident. Unfortunately, it's only the latest example that we've seen. There are too many other cases, including this summer, where anti-Semitic material was found at the Scott Library, not to mention an attack on the Jewish student association. Minister, will you today speak up on behalf of Jewish groups who have been so deeply hurt by this piece of garbage and condemn it, not as an academic paper but for the hate it actually is?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I join them in condemning this attack on Ontario's Jewish community.

I want to reiterate that, as I mentioned, I was very proud earlier this year when the Legislature came together to condemn anti-Semitism on our campuses and in other fora. I look forward to later today, when there is a gathering of Jewish members from the Ontario community as we celebrate this important time of Hanukkah. I

look forward to being able to speak with many members of that community as I'm co-hosting that event that the Premier is attending, along with Monte Kwinter.

I also want to add that the state of Israel is a very good friend of the province of Ontario. I had the privilege of visiting Israel earlier this year with the Premier and a number of members of the Liberal caucus and of this government to improve our ties. So again—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. The Premier met today with Toronto's mayor, Rob Ford. Following the meeting, the mayor stated that he intends to cancel the plans for Transit City without even taking the matter to council. Do this minister and her Premier agree with that assessment?

1120

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We've been very consistent in our conversations in the public, and very clear in our position that we're open to working with the new mayor and council and that we believe that council does need to weigh in on these issues. These are issues that are of great importance to all of the city of Toronto and, I would suggest, to the region, the GTHA. It's very important that council does have a voice on the move-forward position.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary? The member from Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is also to the Minister of Transportation. The government says that they respect local democracy, so it's a pretty basic question and it needs a pretty firm answer: Does the Premier plan to let Mayor Ford scrap Transit City without the consent of the elected city council, yes or no?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's interesting, the member opposite yesterday wasn't so interested in council. Yesterday, she was just interested in unilateral action on behalf of the government. But my answer then is the same as it is now. We are very, very interested in working with the city of Toronto in a collaborative relationship. City council is the elected body that must weigh in on these issues.

These are issues that affect the city of Toronto. They affect the city of Thunder Bay, they affect the contracts that have been signed, and I think that it's a very serious conversation. Council members are meeting for the very first time today, and I look forward to that conversation with the new mayor, with the council members. I know that the Premier will be awaiting council's deliberations as well.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Education. When I am in the riding of Brant, I meet regularly with stakeholders in education and talk about how the government has been standing up for Ontario

families and their children, and how we are making Ontario even stronger, especially in education: primary, high school and post-secondary.

Since 2003, our government has focused investments in education. As a result, class sizes are down, graduation rates are up, and EQAO results clearly indicate that student achievement has improved. My constituents and Ontarians want to know how students in Ontario achieve compared to other jurisdictions outside of Ontario and even Canada. Are there any international comparisons that indicate how Ontarians are doing inside of all of education across the planet?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think it's a very important question, and I, too, have constituents who have come to me. They're very, very pleased with the investments that we've made and with the performance of students in Ontario.

Since 2003, there have been significant improvements. Our 15-year-old students are among the best readers in the world, and now, today, just released, is a study from the Programme for International Student Assessment, called PISA. The study found that 92% of Ontario students met or exceeded PISA's benchmark for reading. Ontario is the only province where our students performed significantly above the Canadian average in combined reading.

Giving students the best start has been a commitment of our government. We continue to make investments to support that. It builds on the good news that we received last week from the McKinsey report, yet another report, an independent report—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Levac: It also speaks to the fact that it means that our teachers are doing a good job as well. I want to thank you for that reinforcement, and I'm sure that all of us in this House, including the opposition—it's a good-news story to know that we are performing on the world stage at a high level.

As a place of diversity, my riding of Brant consists of people from all over the world. There are over 120 countries represented, 85 languages spoken, and they are the key and the strength of our community. Like all parents, my constituents want to make sure that their children are getting the best education possible in Ontario and have that support and opportunity to do so.

Minister, education is an important part of our government's poverty reduction strategy. Ensuring that every student is getting the support that they need is important. Are all our students doing well in Ontario, or are some doing better? We need to know that in terms of our poverty reduction strategy.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: First of all, I want to join the honourable member in thanking all of the people in our schools—teachers, principals, support staff and, of course, parents—because it's a concerted effort that has enabled our students to be successful. Together, we want to make sure that every student is achieving and reaching their full potential.

PISA today recognized Ontario as one of the few jurisdictions in the world where 92% of the students are performing above the benchmark regardless of socio-economic background or first language.

That certainly speaks very well of everyone in our school system. PISA recognizes this achievement as part of our commitment to both excellence and equity, a distinction that few other countries in the world have achieved.

So the honourable member and all members in the Legislature can go to their constituents and tell them we have one of the best school systems anywhere in the world.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Residents of Russell township have collected about 1,375 signatures opposed to a new dump in their community—and that's about 10% of their population—in less than a month, yet their own MPP has yet to introduce these petitions into the Legislature. I'm just wondering if the minister will do the right thing, stand up for Russell residents and stop this dump from moving forward?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I find that an interesting proposition. What I can assure you is that at the Ministry of the Environment, we ensure that we protect human health and the natural environment. We do that because we look at things when it comes to approvals. There is no request from any proponent in Russell before my ministry.

But I understand that there is a proponent, and I've heard this from our excellent member who represents Russell; that a proponent is meeting with the community and sharing with the community what their thoughts are. My understanding, of course, is that this is a municipal issue, because there would be issues of zoning etc., so there is absolutely nothing in front of our ministry.

Our job at the ministry is to protect human health. We do that by looking at the merits, or lack thereof, of an application or a request. I can't prejudge that if there's no application in front of my ministry, and I would hope that you would share, as I know the member from Russell has been doing, that there is absolutely nothing before our ministry in regard to a proposed dump other than what we—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The residents don't want the dump, plain and simple, and they've outreached to my office. Perhaps the real reason the Liberal government won't table these petitions and won't answer the question is because of yesterday's damning report by the auditor, proving this government's total failure in waste diversion.

Now, Ontario PC candidate Marilissa Gosselin has been a very big supporter of the organization. She's been a leading advocate to stop this dump because she knows, like Russell families, that the McGuinty Liberals can't

meet their waste diversion commitments, and that's the reason that they're expanding dumps in Carp and building dumps in Russell. Yesterday's auditor's report confirmed that, despite their promise to divert 60% of waste, they're doing less than 12% in the IC&I.

Given the McGuinty Liberals' abject failure to divert waste from dumps, why should residents of Russell and Carp have to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I find that interesting. When we took government, people used to take used tires and just dump them in a ditch. That's illegal in the province of Ontario. We have a program to make sure that every tire is disposed of.

There used to be hazardous waste that used to go into our landfills. That was the legacy of the other government. We put in programs to make sure that waste electronics and hazardous materials are staying out of it.

There was a time when people would take organics and they would actually put them in the garbage. Now some 850,000 tonnes, last year alone, were diverted so they could be composted. That's the right thing for the environment.

When it comes to the blue box, a million tonnes of materials, just last year alone, were diverted from our landfills.

People in Ontario are doing the right thing. Where we need work is when it comes to the industrial, commercial and institutional sector.

We want to thank the auditor for his recommendations. We think that they're very thoughtful. We look forward to making sure that we protect the environment.

FOREST INDUSTRY

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question is for the Acting Premier. Today, Fryer Forest Products Ltd. in Monetville is celebrating its 50th anniversary by laying off each and every one of their 70 workers. Seventy people are going without a job, today; sitting at home. This is a major blow to the French River area.

They're not asking for a single penny from the treasury, like other companies; they just want access to the forest to provide jobs to 70 families who need them. Instead, Fryer's equipment sat idle in the bush while it took two weeks for the ministry to fax them an already approved approval to commence harvesting. The ministry signs agreements with Fryer to operate two shifts a day and then they don't give them access to the forest; they don't give them access to any logs.

1130

My question is simple: Why is the McGuinty government so bound and determined to throw 70 families out in the cold just before Christmas?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I very much appreciate the question from the member for Nickel Belt. Indeed, as the

member knows, we have been working very, very closely with Fryer Forest Products, as it has been an extraordinarily challenging time for them, and we will continue to do our best to work with them.

There are certainly some great challenges but some great opportunities in the forestry sector, as the member knows well. We are very excited about the wood supply competition that's in place, where we have freed up about 10 million cubic metres of wood and have had 115 proposals brought forward to us that we know will be creating thousands of jobs in the forestry sector. In fact, we have made some conditional offers already, and we will continue to move forward.

The member and I have spoken about this issue on more than one occasion. Certainly I will do whatever I can to continue to work with her and with the company, to see how we can help the community and the company.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The minister talks about helping the forestry industry, but I have 70 people right now sitting in Monetville and in French River who are waiting for an approval, an approval that is not coming. So they cannot go into the bush, they cannot get any logs, they cannot bring wood to the mill, and they cannot be paid.

The critical issue for Fryer Forest Products is access to wood in a timely manner so they can bring wood to the mill, so they can pay their employees. The government can go on and on, but the reality on the ground in Nickel Belt is that those people are sitting at home because of a bureaucracy, because of a ministry's delay and because of inefficiencies.

Let me put that into perspective for you: 70 jobs in French River would be 70,000 jobs in the GTA. If 70,000 people were sitting at home waiting for government approval, the government would get on with it; they would help them out.

My question is simple: What am I going to tell those 70 people, those 70 families—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I understand, as does everyone in the Legislature, but particularly our northern caucus members, about the impact of a job loss in any one of our communities and how extraordinarily significant it is and how difficult it is.

Again, as the member knows, we've been working closely with her and with the community and with Fryer Forest Products to try to find a resolution to this challenge.

Certainly the access-to-wood issue is one that's very important to us. That's also why we're in the process of moving forward on modernizing our forest tenure system. We want to be able to allow access to many other companies that are having difficulty getting access to wood supply.

To the member, again, I appreciate the question. We will continue to work with her and certainly work with the company to find a positive resolution, understanding full well the huge impact of such a decision.

ACCESS TO PUBLIC LANDS

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources. There have been some concerns expressed lately on the topic of crown land access restrictions in the north. Yesterday, an example was brought up in the Legislature where northerners are now being subject to access restrictions when attempting to enter certain provincial parks using roads that they traditionally travelled upon.

I know that many people in the riding and across the north would be grateful for an answer regarding this situation. Would the minister please tell the House what the government's reason is for restricting local access points to specific Ontario parks?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for the question.

I have to say that it was with good reason that the specific access point to Fushimi Lake Provincial Park was subject to an unauthorized motorized vehicle restriction. Had the member from Timmins-James Bay brought this particular case to my attention two weeks ago when I had originally asked, instead of waiting for question period, I would have been able to tell him that the restriction was a matter of public safety. There were concerns regarding snowmobilers entering the park through unauthorized access points, particularly over frozen creeks. I'm certain that people in the House would agree that public safety and liability should be treated with the utmost seriousness.

That said, snowmobile access is allowed to continue through the authorized access point at the main gate to the park.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I appreciate the minister providing some clarity on the issue.

Northerners, particularly people in my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, take the right to access to traditional lands very seriously. Living in northern Ontario, we grow up enjoying a wide variety of outdoor recreational activities and become accustomed to a certain way of life. While northerners realize the remote tourism industry brings jobs to northern Ontario and contributes to the area's overall economy, there is a fear that we are moving too far in favour of one side.

Furthermore, northerners heard the allegations recently made by a member of the Legislature against MNR employees who were said to be in conflicts of interest with their roles and planning authorities.

Would the Minister tell the House about what you have to say to individuals concerned about what they have heard lately regarding access to crown land?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Thanks again to the honourable member. Northern residents continue to enjoy unrestricted access to a vast majority of Ontario's crown land.

We always work to balance the public's access to recreational opportunities with the need to protect and preserve our wilderness and enhance remote area experiences.

To the allegations about MNR officials benefiting from planning decisions: I've had staff look into the matter and we have yet to confirm a specific case of any conflict-of-interest violation. However, if anyone in this House knows of a specific case, I would encourage them to bring it to my attention.

MNR staff do an outstanding job protecting Ontario's natural resources. They're often active members of the communities in which they live and work.

It's important to note that access decisions are made through forest management and land use planning, both of which require public consultation.

I encourage anyone interested in resource management to be involved in our public consultation process.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Peter Tabuns: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Yesterday, in my statement about climate change, I referred to the UNDP. It was recorded as NDP in Hansard, and I'd ask that that be corrected so it shows United Nations Development Program.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. That is a point of order. The honourable member can correct his record.

M^{me} France Gélinas: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Yesterday, when my leader asked a question about the Bonin family, the Premier said he would like to see the actual hydro bill from the Bonin family. I have the bill here with me—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. I appreciate the honourable member—and we'll see that that's forwarded to the Premier's office.

DEFERRED VOTES

SECURING PENSION BENEFITS NOW AND FOR THE FUTURE ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA PÉRENNITÉ DES PRESTATIONS DE RETRAITE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 120. Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1137 to 1142.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members please take their seats.

Ms. Smith has moved third reading of Bill 120. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arnott, Ted
Arthurs, Wayne
Bailey, Robert
Balkissoon, Bas

Elliott, Christine
Fonseca, Peter
Gélinas, France
Gravelle, Michael
Hampton, Howard
Hardeman, Ernie

Mitchell, Carol
Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir

Barrett, Toby	Hillier, Randy
Bartolucci, Rick	Horwath, Andrea
Bentley, Christopher	Hoskins, Eric
Best, Margaret	Hoy, Pat
Bradley, James J.	Hudak, Tim
Broten, Laurel C.	Jaczek, Helena
Brown, Michael A.	Jeffrey, Linda
Brownell, Jim	Johnson, Rick
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jones, Sylvia
Caplan, David	Klees, Frank
Carroll, Aileen	Kwinter, Monte
Chan, Michael	Leal, Jeff
Chiarelli, Bob	Levac, Dave
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario
Craitor, Kim	Martiniuk, Gerry
Crozier, Bruce	Matthews, Deborah
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill
Dickson, Joe	McMeekin, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri	McNeely, Phil
Dombrowsky, Leona	Meilleur, Madeleine
Duguid, Brad	Miller, Norm
Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Paul
Dunlop, Garfield	Milloy, John
	O'Toole, John
	Ouellette, Jerry J.
	Pendergast, Leeanna
	Phillips, Gerry
	Prue, Michael
	Pupatello, Sandra
	Qaadri, Shafiq
	Ramal, Khalil
	Rinaldi, Lou
	Ruprecht, Tony
	Sandals, Liz
	Savoline, Joyce
	Sergio, Mario
	Shurman, Peter
	Smith, Monique
	Sterling, Norman W.
	Tabuns, Peter
	Takhar, Harinder S.
	Van Bommel, Maria
	Wilkinson, John
	Wilson, Jim
	Witmer, Elizabeth
	Yakabuski, John
	Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 90; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on government order number 21, a motion by Mr. Hoskins respecting immigration.

Call in the members. This is a five-minute bell.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 90; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

SPECIAL REPORT, OMBUDSMAN

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that I've laid upon the table a report of the Ombudsman on his investigation into the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services' conduct in relation to Ontario regulation 233/10 under the Public Works Protection Act.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On December 2, 2010, the member for Simcoe—Grey, Mr. Wilson, rose on a question of privilege concerning the distribution of what he argued were election-style pamphlets on the morning of Tuesday, November 30, 2010.

The member purports that the distribution of such documents amounts to a matter of contempt because the

material promotes a proposed government program as if it already has the approval of the assembly.

I've had the opportunity to review the written material supplied by the member for Simcoe—Grey, the comments made by the government House leader, Ms. Smith, and precedents on similar matters.

Let me begin by correcting the assertion made by the member for Simcoe—Grey in his letter where he states that Speaker Curling "found a contempt of the assembly" on February 22, 2005. The following more complete text of Speaker Curling's ruling reveals in fact that it was the opposite:

"The wording and the tone of the documents are not dismissive of the legislative role of the House. On the contrary, they indicate that the government had plans and proposals that require not only negotiation, but also the introduction and passage of legislation. In particular, the board letter and press release contain conditional phrases such as 'intends to introduce legislation,' 'we are proposing,' and 'legislation that, if passed.'

"With respect to the word 'guaranteed' in the documents, I note that it is not used in the sense that passage of enabling legislation was a foregone conclusion, but rather in reference to proposed payments to transfer partners and a proposed provision in future collective bargaining agreements.

"For these reasons, I find that a *prima facie* case of contempt has not been established."

Notwithstanding that the member for Simcoe—Grey erred in his assessment of the conclusion of that ruling, the ruling is apt since its subject was quite similar to the one that we are dealing with today. A review of the pamphlet in question confirms the use of phrases such as "The McGuinty government wants to" and "We're proposing," wording that is almost identical to the conditional phrases used in the letter and press release that Speaker Curling ruled on.

The member for Simcoe—Grey also referred to a ruling by Speaker Stockwell on this same subject. In that case, Speaker Stockwell found a *prima facie* case of privilege did in fact exist. However, a review of the pamphlet that he had before him reveals quite different wording. It contained phrases such as "new city wards will be created," among others, that Speaker Stockwell found to be dismissive of the House and which could reasonably have left one with the impression that the passage of the requisite legislation was a foregone conclusion.

In my opinion, the pamphlet that the member for Simcoe—Grey has brought to my attention is more characteristic of the documentation that Speaker Curling dealt with. I cannot find that the language used is dismissive of the legislative role of the House. On the contrary, the use of qualifying language such as "we are proposing" can only leave the impression that further steps are required before implementation is possible. I cannot find, therefore, that a *prima facie* case of contempt has been established.

I want to thank the member for Simcoe—Grey and the government House leader for their submissions on this matter.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to welcome to the House today two visitors and friends of mine, Les Armstrong and George Fortin from the great riding of Sarnia-Lambton, here for the festivities today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from York West, to welcome a group of grade 10 students who have been visiting Queen's Park today. These are students from James Cardinal McGuigan secondary school and their teacher Mr. Joseph Pulcini. I hope they've enjoyed their visit to Queen's Park today.

Mr. David Zimmer: I'd like to introduce Sandy Liguori, who's the incoming president of the Toronto Automobile Dealers Association. He's here along with his director of government relations, Frank Notti.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to introduce a resident of York South-Weston: Rick Ciccarelli, who is here in the gallery.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FOOD AND CONSUMER PRODUCTS OF CANADA

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize Food and Consumer Products of Canada. Representatives from their organization are here with us today at Queen's Park, and I want to thank them for taking the time to visit us to share their concerns and updates on their industry.

Food and Consumer Products of Canada is a national association that represents member companies, both small and large. The association works to ensure that companies can innovate and grow while also promoting responsible and ethical practices.

Ontario has a very productive agriculture industry, but it is not enough to simply grow food. We need people who can process the food we grow and get it to markets and consumers. Food and Consumer Products of Canada meets this need and contributes greatly to our economy.

The manufacturing sector of the food, beverage and consumer products industry employs 300,000 Canadians, generates almost \$22 billion annually in GDP and contributes more than \$100 million to charitable causes.

The industry embraces world-class regulatory standards while also advocating for smarter regulations. These smarter regulations would continue to ensure safety and quality while at the same time increasing efficiency.

I want to once again thank the representatives from Food and Consumer Products of Canada for being here

today, and I want to express the support of the PC caucus for this valuable association.

Thank you very much for allowing me the time.

RICHARD ALLAIRE

Mr. Jim Brownell: My riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry is very fortunate to have many individuals who demonstrate a strong passion and commitment to volunteer work. Recently, one of the hard-working volunteers in my riding was recognized with the 2010 Community Action Network Against Abuse Award of Excellence. I would like to congratulate and thank Richard Allaire for his tireless work on behalf of his community. This award of excellence was created to honour an individual who has made a significant contribution in the struggle against abuse.

Richard started volunteering with the Red Cross in 2002 as a volunteer member of the branch council. He then proceeded to become chair of the branch council, and Richard currently serves as past chair.

Richard has a particular interest and desire to address and prevent the issue of child sexual abuse in the community. Richard was a founding member of PrevAction in 2007. This group worked to address the impact of child sexual abuse and acted as a catalyst to assist other organizations in their work to end abuse. I surely hope their work continues.

Richard remains the chair of PrevAction and chair of the education subcommittee. He has also been a member of the board of directors of the Children's Treatment Centre for the past nine years, has been involved with the Celebrity Walk and Breakfast charity, the Bike-A-Thon Plus, and the dinner and roast.

I would like to thank Richard Allaire for his tireless work on behalf of the community and congratulate him on an award very well deserved.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Robert Bailey: In a little over two weeks, millions of Canadians will be celebrating the holiday and Christmas season. Family and friends will be coming together to spread cheer and goodwill at parties and dinners across the country.

Unfortunately, for many this season brings with it added pressure and costs that simply stretch the budget too thin. There are many Ontario families that cannot afford to put food on the table. They rely on food banks to help them. In 2009, over 375,000 Ontarians used food banks, an all-time high for this province.

In April, I introduced a private member's bill that provides a simple solution to help families and Ontario farmers. Bill 78, a bill to fight hunger with local food, provides a tax credit for farmers who donate food to the food bank. This will help farmers pay for the harvesting and transportation of the food they are donating.

In September, this bill received unanimous and enthusiastic support on second reading. On October 7, my

colleague Ernie Hardeman called on the McGuinty government to move the bill forward and give it third reading before Christmas, but still it sits stuck in committee as thousands of men, women and children go hungry and decent food spoils in the field.

Don't leave this bill to die in committee. Let's give these families, food banks and farmers something to celebrate. It's time this government moved Bill 78 to third reading. Thank you, and merry Christmas to all.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Khalil Ramal: In the past, I've had the privilege of working with people with special needs and disabilities. It's a rewarding and humbling experience where your most human characteristics are tested and enhanced.

I would like to take a moment to speak about the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, which was commemorated December 3. The United Nations established this day to promote a better understanding of disability issues and focus on the rights of persons with disabilities.

Everyone here has been impacted by people with disabilities. We have always approached them and walked away with a renewed sense of gratitude and respect for human potential, knowing that they have encountered many challenges. Many times they have overcome these challenges, and you could not help but think of the willpower and endurance needed to accomplish them.

Being a witness to their ability and will to conquer their challenges, I can attest that it's not physical or mental capacity that determines strength; it's the human spirit. I would like to highlight the progress we have made to provide services to people with disabilities, but I would like to remind everyone that our continued efforts are needed in order to remove any limitations and barriers facing people with disabilities in the province of Ontario, in Canada and the world.

NANTICOKE GENERATING STATION

Mr. Toby Barrett: As host to the largest coal-fired generating station in North America, Haldimand–Norfolk is under threat of the potential demise of a 630-strong workforce, the loss of up to \$3 million in goods and services to the local economy, as well as municipal taxes of \$4 million a year.

For years, coal closure has been promised with no plan in place once the utilities are idled, at least not until now. For that reason, we find heartening the recently announced long-term energy plan to "consider the possible conversion of some of the units at Nanticoke and Lambton to natural gas;" to explore a pipeline to Nanticoke, as well as to "continue to explore opportunities for co-firing of biomass."

Will biomass or natural gas save the generating station at Nanticoke? I can tell you that both OPG Nanticoke reps and Power Workers' Union members at my recent

Jarvis Symposium on Energy and Our Environment highlighted the potential for energy production and employment through refuelling and re-powering of the Nanticoke generating station. While both union and management are prepared to put shoulders to the wheel, we do need direction from the top.

After close to eight years of missed opportunities to continue the reduction of emissions at Nanticoke, I'm concerned government may let further environmental and economic opportunities slip through its fingers.

FIRST NATIONS POLICE SERVICES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yet again we have another example of how First Nations communities across Ontario are having to live the double standard of what services are available on- and off-reserve. Imagine my surprise when I was contacted by Nishnawbe-Aski policing in regards to services and communities, and in researching what can be done in order to resolve the problem, I find out that the Police Services Act doesn't apply to police on reserves.

I wonder why, in a province as rich as Ontario, a province that puts itself out to be one of the best places in Canada to live, we have a situation where people living on-reserve have one standard when it comes to the services provided by the province of Ontario and a second standard for everybody else living off-reserve.

In the case of Nishnawbe-Aski policing, I'm being told that the Police Services Act does not apply, which means to say that police officers have to go into domestic call situations, as far as domestic disputes, and into various investigations where they have to be alone and don't have to have a partner with them, as is mandated under the Police Services Act for municipal police forces or the Ontario Provincial Police.

Why is it, in the province of Ontario, that we can't have a standard that applies to all Ontarians? It's beyond me. We know that the fire code does not apply on-reserve. Why is it that the life of a person living on-reserve should be deemed any different than a person living off-reserve? We have learned, certainly, from the Kashechewan fire that that should not be the case, and I call upon this government to make sure we have the same standards applied to the citizens of Ontario, no matter where they live.

1510

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's my pleasure to rise in this House today to share some great news. I had the honour of attending the official sod-turning event at the construction site of the new public school being built in my home town of Brighton. It was a long-awaited announcement and an exciting day to see the shovel finally hit the ground.

Many schools in this province had been neglected by previous governments or left in a state of much-needed

repair and/or replacement. My riding of Northumberland–Quinte West has been extremely fortunate, with the construction of several new builds and additions. As a matter of fact, I attended the ribbon-cutting of the new Northumberland Hills Public School in Castleton last month, where I had the pleasure of meeting several people who attended the original school back in 1930. What an amazing new school, with all the most up-to-date technical features to bring our teachers and students into the 21st century.

We haven't forgotten the east end of my riding in Quinte West. They will see the brand new St. Peter's elementary school in addition to St. Paul's secondary school.

In the west end of my riding, Port Hope is proudly sporting a brand new school named Ganaraska Trail Public School, which opened its doors in September 2009. It will complement the addition to St. Anthony's and St. Mary's schools, also in Port Hope.

Today I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Premier, the Minister of Education and our government for having the foresight to invest in these infrastructure projects and, even more importantly, to invest in the future of our youth, providing them with the tools they need to succeed. They now are well-equipped to move forward with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

RIDING OF CARLETON–MISSISSIPPI MILLS

Mr. David Zimmer: I want to say something about my good friend Norm Sterling, who I've known for 30 years. I went to law—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just remind the honourable member—

Mr. David Zimmer: The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Mr. David Zimmer: For over 30 years, he's been a member of the loyal opposition. He's a Conservative in the finest tradition of Bill Davis, and what has happened to him? The Conservative leader has allowed the member for Lanark–Frontenac to threaten his nomination. He's allowed that nomination to be threatened because he wants to sacrifice that member to the leader's personal right-wing ambitions. The PC leader has formed a Faustian pact with the member for Frontenac to threaten the nomination of that very fine Conservative. He has thrown the member for Mississippi Mills under the bus of his personal—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment. Come to order.

Honourable members, one of the things that is of extreme importance to the smooth functioning of this House is that we have respect for one another. We may have philosophical differences, we may have political

differences, but I am going to stop the honourable member because I do not appreciate the direct—

Mr. John Yakabuski: He's impugning motive.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd appreciate it if you would hear me through.

It is always healthy to attack the policies of government or to attack the policies of the opposition, but any time we start to cross the line and start to attack another member of this House, it does a disservice to this House as a whole.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): With that, I am going to stop the honourable member's statement and I'm going to ask the honourable member from Thornhill to go to his seat and withdraw the comment that he made as well, please.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Regretfully, but I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, just—

Mr. Peter Shurman: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order: Because you have ruled on the content of the statement and the uproar that it could cause in the House—and, in my opinion, that it also impugned the motives of one member—I would ask that the entire statement be removed from the record.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ruled on the matter and the statement had proceeded to that point. It is not for the Speaker to strike anything of what any member says in this House from the record. I'd just remind all members again that we do need to be cognizant of the different opinions that members bring forward.

DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Mike Colle: I rise today to condemn the unwarranted attack made on the Canadian Centre for Diversity program, which teaches young people to fight discrimination through their March of Remembrance and Hope project, where young adults of diverse backgrounds travel with Holocaust survivors to sites of Nazi atrocities in Poland. The so-called thesis just published by a graduate student at U of T also has the audacity to condemn a program known as the March of the Living, which takes young Jews, with survivors, to Poland and Israel. Many of my constituents have been on the March of the Living, and to find that this thesis now condemns this as being racist is totally appalling and unacceptable, not only to my constituents but to everyone who is fair and decent in this province.

This unmitigated attack by this student at the University of Toronto against caring people who are trying to come to grips with the murder of over six million of their relatives, who were slaughtered by the Nazis, has no place in any university, nor does it have any place in Ontario. It is up to us in this Legislature to condemn this hateful and hurtful diatribe that is disguised as an academic paper. This is something that is below this great University of Toronto. It has no place in the Uni-

versity of Toronto and should be totally rejected by all of us who are against hate speech and are against hate. We should all condemn this incredible attempt to slander people who are trying to meet with their grief.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Hoy: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters / Projet de loi 135, Loi concernant les mesures financières et budgétaires et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 1, 2010, the bill is ordered for third reading.

MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would seek unanimous consent of the House that the statement from the member of Willowdale that was abbreviated on your orders be removed from the record of Hansard.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? I'm afraid I heard a no.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TOWING INDUSTRY ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 SUR L'INDUSTRIE DU REMORQUAGE

Mr. Zimmer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 147, An Act to regulate the motor vehicle towing industry in Ontario / Projet de loi 147, Loi réglementant l'industrie du remorquage de véhicules automobiles en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. David Zimmer: The bill provides for the self-regulation of the towing industry in Ontario in the public interest. The Towing Industry Council of Ontario is

established. The council, which is managed by a board of directors, is made up of operators of towing businesses and tow truck drivers, who must register with the council in order to carry on a towing business or operate a tow truck.

At least 40% of directors are appointed from outside the industry to ensure that the public interest is represented. The activities of the council are funded through fees established by a bylaw of the board and paid by registered persons and applicants for registration. A complaints and discipline procedure is provided to ensure that registered persons are held accountable for the way in which they provide towing services. Registrations may be suspended or revoked if necessary. The board of the council is provided with regulation-making powers that are subject to the approval of the Minister of Government Services.

I'd also like to introduce Doug Nelson, who's the executive director of the Provincial Towing Association of Ontario. He's up here along with several other leaders in the towing industry here in Ontario. Thank you for being here.

1520

PETITIONS

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just before we move to petitions, I want to remind members that when presenting petitions, it is in order to either read the petition or give a brief synopsis of the content. Members may want to give the latter option some consideration if their petition is particularly lengthy or if it contains language that might otherwise not be permitted in debate. I've noted that a number of petitions make reference to other members by their names rather than their titles or their ridings.

I remind everyone again that saying something indirectly that cannot be said directly continues to be out of order. I ask that you be cognizant when you are presenting your petitions that if there is a name—I'll cite an example: There is a petition that contains the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka's name. I would just ask and beg the indulgence of the House that they read into the record "the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka" so that we are being consistent with what we do.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the residents of Ontario feel that this current Liberal government is directly responsible for their rising household debt by slapping them with higher taxes, such as the health tax and the HST, higher fees, higher hydro bills and higher auto insurance premiums; and

"Whereas the people have lost faith in their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government immediately resign and call an election."

I have many, many of them.

RAIL LINE EXPANSION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm reading a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding the McGuinty government plan for diesel trains.

"Whereas Metrolinx, an agency of the government of Ontario, is planning an eightfold expansion in diesel rail traffic from 50 trains per day to over 400 trains per day in the Georgetown corridor, which cuts through west-end neighbourhoods including Liberty Village, Parkdale, Roncesvalles, the Junction and Weston; and

"Whereas this expansion will make this the busiest diesel rail corridor on the planet; and

"Whereas exhaust from diesel locomotives is a known danger to public health, linked to cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, cancers and premature death; and

"Whereas diesel exhaust poses an especially potent danger to children and the elderly; and

"Whereas diesel trains are harmful to the environment and contribute to climate change and are also heavy, loud and disruptive to neighbourhoods and local quality of life; and

"Whereas over 250,000 people live within one kilometre of this line and 30,000 children attend one of more than 200 schools within one kilometre of the tracks;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge our leaders to act now to ensure that the rail expansion in the Georgetown south rail corridor, including the air-rail link, be electrified from the outset and that there be no further expenditure on diesel technology."

As transportation critic I'm delighted to sign this for the NDP. We've always been on board, the only party to do so, and I'm giving it—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

I also remind all the honourable members—perhaps we need to have petition school 101—that they are to read the petitions or the abbreviated version of the petitions and not editorialize.

RAIL LINE EXPANSION

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Metrolinx, an agency of the government of Ontario, is planning an eightfold expansion in diesel rail traffic from 50 trains per day to over 400 trains per day in the Georgetown corridor, which cuts through west-end neighbourhoods including Liberty Village, Parkdale, Roncesvalles, the Junction and Weston; and

"Whereas this expansion will make this the busiest diesel rail corridor on the planet; and

"Whereas exhaust from diesel locomotives is a known danger to public health, linked to cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, cancers and premature death; and

"Whereas diesel exhaust poses an especially potent danger to children and the elderly; and

"Whereas diesel trains are harmful to the environment and contribute to climate change and are also heavy, loud and disruptive to neighbourhoods and local quality of life; and

"Whereas over 250,000 people live within one kilometre of this line and 30,000 children attend one of more than 200 schools within one kilometre of the tracks;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge our leaders to act now to ensure that the rail expansion in the Georgetown south rail corridor, including the air-rail link, be electrified from the outset and that there be no further expenditure on diesel technology."

I send this to you via page Drew.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to restore medical labs in Tottenham, Stayner and Elmvale and to reduce lineups throughout Simcoe-Grey:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians."

I want to thank Tecumseth Pines Home Owners' Association president Geoff Fromow for sending this petition to me.

RAIL LINE EXPANSION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Metrolinx, an agency of the government of Ontario, is planning an eightfold expansion in diesel rail

traffic from 50 trains per day to over 400 trains per day in the Georgetown corridor, which cuts through west-end neighbourhoods including Liberty Village, Parkdale, Roncesvalles, the Junction and Weston; and

“Whereas this expansion will make this the busiest diesel rail corridor on the planet; and

“Whereas exhaust from diesel locomotives is a known danger to public health, linked to cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, cancers and premature death; and

“Whereas diesel exhaust poses an especially potent danger to children and the elderly; and

“Whereas diesel trains are harmful to the environment and contribute to climate change and are also heavy, loud and disruptive to neighbourhoods and local quality of life; and

“Whereas over 250,000 people live within one kilometre of this line and 30,000 children attend one of more than 200 schools within one kilometre of the tracks;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge our leaders to act now to ensure that the rail expansion in the Georgetown south rail corridor, including the air-rail link, be electrified from the outset and that there be no further expenditure on diesel technology.”

I support this petition, and I will sign it.

RAIL LINE EXPANSION

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to present a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas Metrolinx, an agency of the government of Ontario, is planning an eightfold expansion in diesel rail traffic from 50 trains per day to over 400 trains per day in the Georgetown corridor, which cuts through west-end neighbourhoods including Liberty Village, Parkdale, Roncesvalles, the Junction and Weston; and

“Whereas this expansion will make this the busiest diesel rail corridor on the planet; and

“Whereas exhaust from diesel locomotives is a known danger to public health, linked to cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, cancers and premature death; and

“Whereas diesel exhaust poses an especially potent danger to children and the elderly; and

“Whereas diesel trains are harmful to the environment and contribute to climate change and are also heavy, loud and disruptive to neighbourhoods and local quality of life; and

“Whereas over 250,000 people live within one kilometre of this line and 30,000 children attend one of more than 200 schools within one kilometre of the tracks;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge our leaders to act now to ensure that the rail expansion in the Georgetown south rail corridor, including the air-rail link, be electrified from the outset and that there be no further expenditure on diesel technology.”

I agree with the sentiment of this petition. I will sign it and send it over with page Gabriella.

1530

POWER PLANT

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has cancelled the Oakville peaker plant, citing a decrease in need for power in that community, proposing to meet needs by better transmission, and despite the fact that the government may face a \$1-billion lawsuit due to the cancellation;

“Whereas the King township peaker plant is going forward, with the Ontario government having shut off debate about the plan at the OMB through regulation, after failing to provide a proper environmental assessment or community consultation;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To give the King township peaker plant and the local community the same consideration as residents of Oakville, and to decide on the future of the peaker plant on a non-partisan basis.”

As I agree with this, I have affixed my signature and given it to Sarah.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Sault Ste. Marie and Algoma, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning, a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients” ... ; and

“Whereas,” since October 2009, “insured PET scans” are being performed “in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens” of the northeast.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Elizabeth to bring it to the clerks.

RAIL LINE EXPANSION

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I received over a thousand signatures from the Clean Train Coalition. This is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“Whereas Metrolinx, an agency of the government of Ontario, is planning an eightfold expansion in diesel rail traffic from 50 trains per day to over 400 trains per day in the Georgetown corridor, which cuts through west-end neighbourhoods including Liberty Village, Parkdale, Roncesvalles, the Junction and Weston; and

"Whereas this expansion will make this the busiest diesel rail corridor on the planet; and

"Whereas exhaust from diesel locomotives is a known danger to public health, linked to cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, cancers and premature death; and

"Whereas diesel exhaust poses an especially potent danger to children and the elderly; and

"Whereas diesel trains are harmful to the environment and contribute to climate change and are also heavy, loud and disruptive to neighbourhoods and local quality of life; and

"Whereas over 250,000 people live within one kilometre of this line and 30,000 children attend one of more than 200 schools within one kilometre of the tracks;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge our leaders to act now to ensure that the rail expansion in the Georgetown south rail corridor, including the air-rail link, be electrified from the outset and that there be no further expenditure on diesel technology."

Since I agree with this petition, I will sign it.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: My petition reads as follows:

"Whereas industrial wind turbine developments raise concerns among citizens over ... health, safety and property values; and

"Whereas the Green Energy Act allows wind turbine developments to bypass municipal approvals and meaningful public input;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment revise the Green Energy Act to allow full public input and municipal approval on all industrial wind farm developments and that the Minister of the Environment conduct a thorough scientific study on health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines."

I'm pleased to sign and support it and give it to Josh, my personal favourite page.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Rosario Marchese: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that" the Premier "immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST)."

I'm signing this petition.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's a great petition.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Speaker misspoke, because the Speaker needs to be non-partisan. The Speaker's reference to that petition is that it was short and to the point.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mrs. M. Aileen Carroll: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known, universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"Whereas, while more research is needed, MS patients should not need to await such results;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario allow people with multiple sclerosis to obtain the venoplasty that so impacts their quality of life and that of their family and caregivers."

I agree with the 1,160 people who signed this petition and I affix my signature.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Toby Barrett: A petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario families are struggling in an economic downturn to meet the demands of eco taxes, the HST, energy price hikes, wasteful spending and increased taxes;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"Initiate the process for legislation to allow Ontario residents to recall Dalton."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The same applies to the earlier Speaker's ruling that we need to refer to titles, ministries or ridings, and not even an individual's first name.

Mr. Toby Barrett: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The guidelines for petitions—people put these together last September or October. There's no guideline. I mean, I'm referred to as Toby Barrett in my riding, not by my riding name.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's very clear under parliamentary procedure and customs that we refer, notwithstanding anything that is written in a petition or if somebody was quoting from something—the Speaker would rule that one must use a title, a ministerial title or a riding name. The Speaker will continue to do that.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HELPING ONTARIO FAMILIES AND MANAGING RESPONSIBLY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'AIDE AUX FAMILLES ONTARIENNES ET LA GESTION RESPONSABLE

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters / Projet de loi 135, Loi concernant les mesures financières et budgétaires et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to lead off third reading debate on Bill 135. Of course, we don't have much time to debate this, because we do have a draconian time allocation motion. Actually, the subcommittee for the finance committee met last Wednesday for public hearings on Thursday—the very next day, so obviously, how's the public supposed to even be aware of them?—for clause-by-clause on Monday, and here we are, Tuesday, in third reading debate. That same time allocation motion limits debate to an hour. So they are, obviously, rushing this through.

I know we have a couple other members who want to speak, so I've shortened my notes as much as possible.

As I previously mentioned, this is a bill that involves amendments to many acts, but its primary purpose is to provide a 10% energy benefit, which will cost taxpayers more than \$1 billion each plus interest. The other thing that the bill does is to allow the government to make additional expenditures, and given the revelations of the Auditor General's report yesterday, I'm not convinced that taxpayers are prepared to hand over any more money to the McGuinty government or its agencies. I'll come back to this point later.

First I want to deal with the energy cost, because it is likely the leading issue that constituents are contacting me about. The introduction of the benefit calls into question the McGuinty government's green energy policy, or as I call it, the "buy high, sell low" energy policy. The problem is that consumers are left holding the bag.

I received this email last night and I want to share it with my colleagues. It's a little long; I hope I can get through the whole thing.

"Hi, Norm,

"Just so that you and your colleagues have the details to back up the \$9 billion per 1,000 MW waste statistic that was quoted in the House, the following will provide you with how the number is calculated.

1540

"Hydro Quebec has been entering into 20-year fixed-price contracts (subject to an annual inflation factor) with their neighbouring US states (Maine, Vermont, New York, etc.) at approximately 6.5 cents per kWh. If one allows for an inflation factor of 2% per year over the 20-year period, then the price at the end of the 20 years would be approximately 9.7 cents per kWh for an average price over the 20 years of approximately 8.1 cents per kWh. For the purposes of my calculations I have allowed for an average price over the next 20 years for renewable hydro energy from Quebec to be 8.5 cents per kWh. As the OPA"—the Ontario Power Authority—"is paying 44 cents per kWh under the FIT"—feed-in tariff—"contracts it is entering into with solar providers of 10-MW or more solar farms, then a contract with Hydro Quebec would be for 35.5 cents (0.44 less 0.085)

per kWh less than what the OPA is contracting to pay for solar power under the FIT program contracts for the same 20-year period. It is important to stress also that hydro power is available continuously during the course of the day—unlike solar, which is only available during the middle of the day when demand for power is not at its peak (such peaks are 7-9 a.m. and 6-9 p.m. when no solar is available)."

I won't go through the whole thing because I know I won't have time. I'll miss a section but get to where he's making the calculation.

"With the OPA contracting to pay an unnecessary excess of 35.5 cents per kWh for solar power, then the excess payment per 10-MW solar farm works out to be \$93,294,000.

"Per 1,000 MS this works out to be \$9.32 billion (hence my rounded-down number of \$9 billion per 1000 MW of solar power...)."

Obviously, this constituent has done a lot of research. I don't have time to read his whole email in, but I will conclude his email by reading, "These are issues that deserve addressing by the House before these FIT contracts sink the province." And he points out the huge, excess amount of money that these contracts will cost; and even the government admitted in its fall economic statement that over the next five years they're predicting prices are going to go up 46%, despite having said that they would only go up 1% a year based on the feed-in tariff and the green energy program. The latest number is 46%, and I'm afraid it may be much more than that.

This bill also deals with spending money, so I'd like to get to the Auditor General's report and the argument that we cannot support a bill that provides for additional spending by the McGuinty government, as Bill 135 does.

Premier McGuinty time and time again shows his lack of respect for taxpayers' money. The Auditor General's findings are troubling, not just because they reveal waste but because this is another in a string of reports that exhibit years of waste. It signifies a complete disregard for how hard Ontarians work and how precious their tax dollars are, at least to them.

I want to run through some of the Auditor General's remarks as they relate to MPAC in particular. The report indicates that of 1,400 transactions reviewed, one in eight indicated that "the assessed value differed from the sale price by more than 20%."

"These variances most often occur because the corporation does not have up-to-date property data from a property inspection."

So some property owners may be over- or under-assessed and therefore are paying more or less than their fair share.

The Auditor General made a number of observations related to how MPAC manages its staff, carries out inspections and updates its records. More disturbing to me are the revelations about spending related to procurement of goods and services. To begin with, MPAC spent more than \$50 million in each of the last five years to acquire good and services; however, the Auditor Gen-

eral's audit revealed that from almost all the acquisitions it reviewed, there was no document to justify the acquisition or to demonstrate that alternatives had been considered. And often the paperwork was either missing or had not received proper approval. Furthermore, for almost half the acquisitions, there was no evidence that they had been acquired competitively, and where there was paperwork, it failed to show what criteria were taken into consideration in selecting the successful vendor.

In one example, a multi-year contract with a potential value of \$450,000 was awarded to a vendor even though the vendor scored zero on all selection criteria. Other instances show that MPAC awarded agreements worth just under \$100,000, each to three different contractors, with little or no supporting documentation. The agreements were each extended between 12 and 14 times, which resulted in total payments of between \$1.1 million and \$1.6 million. Worst yet, some of the agreement extensions were approved long after the additional work had been completed and paid for. Invoices for consulting services revealed many instances where no supporting time sheets were provided, or any other supportive documentation. In other cases, the hourly rate billed exceeded the rate agreed to in the contract.

In most cases, reimbursements for travel expenses were not supported by receipts. This included an \$11,000 travel expense claimed by a contractor. The Auditor General found several instances where senior staff were reimbursed for travel to out-of-province destinations which were questionable, including a trip to attend the North American Conference on Customer Management, "Inspiring Relationships for Profitable Growth and Personal Fulfillment," in California.

The Auditor General's sampling of reimbursements for meals, hospitality and employee rewards disclosed \$955 for a dinner for 12 people at the CN Tower for a department celebration of year-end results; \$746 for a Christmas lunch for 16 staff; \$550 for a boat cruise; \$625 for gift cards; and \$1,725 for custom golf clubs, Nintendo Wii consoles and iPod touch models purchased as promotional gifts. The Auditor General rightly questioned why such promotional gifts were needed in the first place.

Jim McCarter put it succinctly when he said, "Our review of a wide variety of expenditures for goods and services found that the corporation"—MPAC—"did not comply with good business practices or with its own mandatory policies and procedures, where such existed."

For these reasons and countless others, how could we on this side of the House possibly support a bill which will put more taxpayer dollars in the hands of those who have demonstrated time and time again that they are reckless with those precious dollars?

We will not be supporting Bill 135. I've gone very quickly through my notes and missed half of them so that the member from Durham, as usual, will be able to speak. Also, I know the member from Thornhill, who will also be speaking, wishes to get some comments on the record. Thank you for the opportunity, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: In the tradition of our House leader and member from Welland—who pointed out to the House something that we should all know, that the title of a bill is debatable—I'm going to take the wonderful opportunity given to me by the McGuinty government to debate the title of this bill, Bill 135, Helping Ontario Families. Let's talk about how this government has helped—or not—Ontario families.

Certainly, we have evidence in this last week alone: two, might I say, damning reports about the ways in which the McGuinty government has done anything but help Ontario families. Just hours ago, the Ombudsman released his report about the G20 weekend and what went on here, which I think people across Ontario should be horrified at. This is really a confirmation of something most of us already knew: that this government passed a secret act—actually, enacted a secret act. It was hidden, as the Ombudsman said, in plain view, an act that he claims should have been deemed illegal and unconstitutional. They did it at a time, if you can imagine, when the House was in session without letting any of the duly elected MPPs, including some of their own back-benchers, know what they were doing, and certainly without letting the public of Ontario know that most of their rights had been taken away with the stroke of a pen.

Let me tell you what it looked like on the ground in Ontario. We assume some rights in this province to be inalienable, if I can use that word. One of them was to be able to walk around the streets of our own city without being harassed or searched without a warrant; certainly the use of the streets of our city, we assumed—all of that taken away. We expected that when and if we were arrested, there would be reasonable charges and we would have access to legal counsel—all of the obvious rights of what we deem a democracy.

Let me tell you what I witnessed first-hand in my own riding—

Hon. Monique M. Smith: On a point of order: I'm not sure what title the member for Parkdale—High Park thinks she's referring to, but this afternoon we are debating Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters. I would ask that she refrain from the course of discourse that she is on and perhaps discuss the budget bill of the fall.

1550

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would remind the member that she should keep her remarks directly related to the bill.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Is it not entitled also Helping Ontario Families, Madam Speaker?

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Okay, back to the budget bill.

Let's talk about how money was spent, then. As it is a budget bill, of course, we can talk about what the money is spent for, and it's certainly not spent for helping Ontario families.

We heard from the Ombudsman this morning about how money was spent the weekend of the G20 in this

province. I can tell you that in my own riding of Parkdale–High Park, the money was spent by the McGuinty government to stop young people without warrant, to search their backpacks without explanation, to arrest some and to take over the streets. This is what it looked like when the McGuinty government enacted this secret act. Certainly, that is how their money was spent.

But if they would like to talk about the 10% reduction on hydro bills that's only going to be good till May, I'm happy to come back to that, too. I'm happy to talk about—

Interjections.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Despite being heckled by the government House leader and the Minister of Energy, I'm happy to talk about the 46% rise in hydro rates that the people of Ontario are going to witness, versus the 10% break they'll get back for a while, eliminated at any moment by the stroke of a pen of the cabinet. I'm happy to talk about that as well.

It's really something when—and I've said this before in this House many times. I think particularly when a woman is standing here, to be shouted down by a male Minister of Energy is a little egregious in the same week as December 6—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Methinks they doth protest too much.

Let's talk about the budget—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On a point of order: My colleague three chairs away from me is speaking and I can't hear her. I would appreciate if the government would stop trying to shout her down so she cannot have her say.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It's not a point of order.

I'd ask all members to come to order.

The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Certainly, when we're talking about government monies being spent and how they're spent, one thinks of another report that came out in this last week, and that is the Auditor General's report.

There, we're looking at money being spent—billions, in fact, being awarded; "mis-awarded" is perhaps a better term—money going out with little tempering; money going out, really, with only a few hours spent; money going out to not shovel-in-the-ground-ready projects, as it was accounted for—which reminds me of, shortly after I was elected, the Collegiate affair, where \$35 million went out the back door with little accounting. A million dollars to a cricket club, if I remember correctly. Now they've outdone themselves in the McGuinty government. Now we have billions going out with little accounting.

Also in that Auditor General's report, when he looked at money being spent by the McGuinty government, he looked at perhaps some of the egregious ways in which it's not being spent. I think of the support payments to all of those families, women and children, who are waiting

before Christmas, perhaps with an eye if not to buying a gift, at least to paying the rent and feeding their children. We learn that around 20% of those awaiting support payments are forced to go on social assistance because they're not receiving them from the government agency that is charged with providing them, and that only about 20% to 25% of the cases even get resolved through this agency. That's truly a damning statistic about the way this government handles the precious tax dollars and the precious lives, one might say, of the most vulnerable.

Certainly, where MPAC is concerned, where property assessments are concerned, in response to questions today from the opposition members, this government seemed to blame the municipalities for something that is clearly their charge and their warrant. I know this is nothing new—the government acts as if it is—that the Auditor General brought to light. Sadly, unfortunately, we know that in my riding and across the ridings in other MPPs' areas MPAC assessments and complaints against MPAC are constant.

My staff became de facto agents for our constituents arguing with MPAC when the last round of assessments came out. We had town halls on the issue, so this is nothing new. The Auditor General has just shone a light on something every MPP knows goes on in their ridings: that MPAC doesn't know what it's doing when it comes to assessing properties. Many of the assessments are 20% over the value of houses.

Certainly we've got lots of evidence—and we've been collecting it in my riding for years—about MPAC, but this government acts as if this is a revelation brought forward by the Auditor General. Well, perhaps it is to them. Perhaps they're not listening to their constituents enough.

Also in the Auditor General's report about the way money is spent in this province, we heard that 50,000 patients are stuck, are languishing in hospital beds, who should be in long-term care or certainly should be at home perhaps, receiving some much cheaper and perhaps more appropriate care through our CCACs. Again, the government gets up and says, "We're working on it; things are getting better." If you are one of those 50,000 patients who are in hospital risking their health being there, for heaven's sake, who are waiting to go to a long-term-care bed, that seemingly doesn't exist. Surely "working on it" isn't an answer; surely "things are getting better"—well, the question is, for whom are they getting better? Certainly not for those 50,000 patients, certainly not for those thousands of families that are awaiting child support payments; it's certainly not getting better for them.

The government can shout all they want, but the fact of the matter is that everybody sees what they seem incapable of seeing. Carol Goar, who is a constituent of mine, wrote a wonderful column the other day, and I'm going to quote from it. She says, "The 1.6 million Ontarians living in poverty had to settle for an 18-month study of social assistance, a slight loosening of the rent rules for subsidized housing and an extensive list" from

the government crowing about what they've done that's good that never manifests in their paycheques, in their social assistance cheques or in housing.

Guess what? Four housing ministers and three years later, we finally get the long-awaited, long-ballyhooed housing report. Think about it. There were thousands of submissions and people hours that went into long, exhaustive consultations. What did they get out of it? Here is what they didn't get: not one new unit of affordable housing, not one new dollar for affordable housing, not one new rent supplement, which is what all the food banks have been calling for, which is what all those who are active in the anti-poverty field are calling for, and certainly not even a change to the Planning Act allowing municipalities to bring in inclusionary zoning if they wanted. I have a stack this thick in my office of municipalities that have called on the government to allow them to do that. The government won't even allow the municipalities to look at that option. That was the long-awaited housing strategy.

This government has become a complete master at what one might call spin. But let's put it this way: They've put a new spin on spin. What they do is bring in those who are active in various fields, they allow them to speak, they consult with them endlessly and make them feel important and promise them that they are going to deliver something, and then, at the end of what is often years of study, years of consultation, they bring in virtually nothing in response to all of their demands.

1600

Again, it's not just the New Democratic Party saying this; it's activists in the field. It's Campaign 2000 who are saying this; it's tenants' organizations who are saying this; it's Star columnists who are saying this; it's the Wellesley Institute saying this. It's institute after association after group after activist collective saying this. This is not a government that's helping families. This is a government that's spending their own taxpayers' money in a way that shows very little return for the money spent and, in fact, will burden the next several generations with debt. That's the reality.

What people in Ontario need to know is that for all the inaction, this government is still paying about \$10 billion a year in interest on accumulated debt—\$10 billion a year. It's unbelievable.

Mr. Jim Wilson: And next year it's rising to \$16 billion.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My friend says it's rising to \$16 billion. This is just the interest, in an era of extremely low interest rates.

Now, imagine for a minute the housing that \$10 billion could buy. Imagine for a minute the extra adults in our classrooms that \$10 billion could buy. Imagine the reductions in tuition in our post-secondary institutions that \$10 billion could buy. Imagine the number of long-term-care beds that \$10 billion could buy. I mean, imagine the infrastructure that could be developed. Imagine the jobs that could be created for \$10 billion, and going up, I'm told, to \$16 billion. That's just the

interest; it's just the interest on the debt, which this government has managed to double in seven years.

I remind the House that one of my personal heroes, voted the greatest Canadian by listeners to CBC, Tommy Douglas, always produced balanced budgets. He actually managed to do a great deal of progressive legislation, and always produced balanced budgets. This government isn't giving us a great deal and is managing to spend an enormous amount. This is the worst of possible realities that we have now in Ontario.

So to go over a few ways in which this government is not managing the money of Ontarians wisely is to simply look at the flurry of reports that we've received from independent agencies, and also from government ones: the Auditor General—now, there's a radical—who has condemned the way that this government is spending its money; the Ombudsman, who comes in with a report about a particular weekend that shall go down in infamy in the history of Ontario—there was money ill spent, I'll tell you; the housing report and the so-called anti-poverty consultation, whose results won't come in until 2012—now, if that isn't a campaign promise, I don't know what is. Meanwhile, the special diet allowance of \$250 is being restricted.

The housing report that provides no housing, a housing report that provides not one unit of new housing—amazing. When my husband and I were in Sweden, a country of nine million—we have some 13 million in Ontario—they managed to produce 100,000 new units of housing a year for 10 years. But this province, with 13 million, can't even fulfill the 2003 promise of the Premier for 20,000 new units. Housing activists have been asking for 10,000 new units a year. Don't hold your breath, I would say to all of those anti-poverty and housing activists out there and all of those who want to see more democracy, not less, in the province of Ontario. Don't hold your breath, because with the interest payment of \$10 billion and rising to \$16 billion a year, you're not going to see a lot of new spending in any area in this province unless something dramatic happens across the aisle.

So certainly, when it comes time to help Ontario families with the way that we spend money, giving them a little bit back and then charging them a whole lot more isn't our idea of the way to go about it. When it comes time to help Ontario families, I certainly wouldn't go about it by enacting secret legislation that's put into place secretly that takes away their rights. When going about helping Ontario families, I wouldn't have a government agency called MPAC that rates their house as worth 20% more, or one for those who need child support payments that doesn't answer their calls and solves only 20% of their cases. I also wouldn't award billions in infrastructure money that was given by the federal government without much perusal at all, and certainly not to shovel-in-the-ground-ready projects when so many need so much.

I certainly wouldn't call it helping Ontario families when a housing report and its so-called anti-poverty—

remember, this is a government that said it was going to reduce poverty by 25% in five years. They're actually on track to increase poverty by 25% in the next five years. That's closer to the truth.

Is this a government that's helping Ontario families? Not any of the families I know, not any of the people I speak to when I knock on doors, not any of the constituents who call in to complain about this, that or the other file—not any of them.

This is a bill that gives a little bit back, as a campaign promise, so to speak, while taking a whole lot out. The dumb-and-dumber, not-so-smart meters—the ATM machines that are now being installed in everybody's house—will make sure that the 10% off their hydro bill is quickly compensated for by huge increases. We're looking at, we've heard, 46% in the next while.

One could go on about how this government is not helping Ontario families and how this government is absolutely not managing their money wisely or well and will continue to do so until that halcyon day in October 2011.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Johnson: I just want to speak briefly to this bill—take this chance to speak to it.

A couple of things that we need to know about the 2010 fall budget bill, or Bill 135: We are helping Ontario families, farms and small businesses with their electrical costs. The proposed Ontario clean energy benefit will provide eligible consumers with a benefit equal to 10% of the total cost of the electricity on their bills, including tax, effective January 1, 2011. The opposition parties were requesting an 8% reduction; we've gone beyond that. This will help over four million residential consumers and more than 400,000 small businesses and farms.

Electrical bills are rising because of the necessary and unavoidable new investments required to ensure that Ontario has a clean, modern and reliable system. Ontario families and businesses are now paying the true cost of electricity, and every little bit of assistance helps during these lean times.

The proposed OCEB is in addition to several measures in place, or proposed, to help families and businesses cope with rising home energy and electrical costs. Our Open Ontario plan is creating jobs and protecting services. Ontario's tax plan for jobs and growth will help create nearly 600,000 new jobs within the next 10 years. Income taxes have been cut for nine out of 10 taxpayers, and we are protecting the progress Ontario families have made in their schools and hospitals.

Unlike in the 407 deal made by the previous government, which sold it to a Spanish interest, the province retains control over fees charged by Teranet for statutory services.

Other members of my caucus are going to speak to this issue as well. I'm very pleased to support this bill, and I urge all members of the House to do so as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I want to speak for a few minutes and reserve some time for my friend from Durham.

I want to focus specifically on Bill 135's aspect pertaining to the 10% clean energy benefit because, to me, to call this a bait and switch is a mild description of what's being done to Ontarians who have to pay electricity bills. Let's be honest: That's every Ontarian who lives in a house or rents an apartment—anybody.

The title of the bill is Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act, 2010. One thing I'm going to give this Liberal government credit for: Boy, do they know how to entitle bills. They all sound great, but when you take a look at what's in them, it's just unbelievable.

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I'm going to use my time to read a couple of comments into the record because the Liberals seem to be in denial when it comes to what comes into their email queues or into the mailbag when the letters are delivered at the office. They're getting the same things I'm getting, and I'm just going to pull some salient quotes out.

"I can't help but think that my liberty is being challenged here and that I am being told how I should live and conduct my activities within my own home or pay, literally, the consequences. It's one thing to educate a population about energy efficiency, as there is already plenty of incentive to curb costs, but another thing entirely when government starts dictating, in a very surreptitious fashion, how and when to do so. And we're not talking about some frivolous action that is easily curtailed but rather a fundamental service that cannot be avoided and is, in fact, a matter of life and death in this country."

"In view of all the economic challenges the citizenry of this country have recently endured, how can this policy be justified? Is this yet another assault on our pocketbooks as costs of living continue to skyrocket while wages remain stagnant or am I just to be numbered with the faceless many who have slipped through the cracks?"

That's one. Here's another:

"We increased temperatures for AC and other positive habit changes. Our usage is aligning to the optimal model in that 56% of our usage is on off-peak, with another 27% in mid-peak. And my bills have gone up over \$200. Now that's a reward for conservation and moving usage profiles."

"As a father of three children I would much rather invest my hard-earned money in other priorities for my children, not to support a very inefficient and ineffective organization like the Ontario Power Authority..."

Here's another one:

"Peter, we recently had our smart meter installed. Today I received my first bill. My hydro rate went up \$40, which alone is close to \$500 more a year."

"That is a substantial increase. I dare anyone to explain to me how I can conserve energy and save that kind of money or come close. I don't know who put this

into effect but I see only as another huge tax grab by the government."

It goes on and on. Where do I begin to debate this? I can't really debate the fullness of the bill. How this Premier has the nerve to label a bill "Helping Families" when all he's done is tax them to death, I don't know.

The truth is, this is just one more omnibus bill that says one thing but really means another under this government. It's on and on and on. Tax us to death, and pretty soon, you know what? We'll die. You're killing this province. That's what you're doing.

As usual, we're given very little time to review amendments that are highly technical and warrant greater scrutiny.

We're constantly inundated with do-nothing bills under this Liberal government. The McGuinty mantra: "Say very little, offend no one, accomplish nothing, and go ahead and you'll be re-elected." Not so. October is coming.

Just look at their amendments. They divert attention from the real issue, and the real issue is the fall economic statement that drives this bill. The statement is further proof of the McGuinty government's fiscal mismanagement.

Expert economists, not us, have judged Dalton McGuinty as the worst fiscal manager amongst all the other Premiers—the Premier who has managed, in seven and a half years, to double the debt that was incurred from Confederation to the point in 2003-04 when he took office.

Ontario's real per capita GDP has declined by 8% since 2000. Meanwhile, the McGuinty Liberals spend \$2.1 million more every hour than what they collect in revenue, and they're going to give the people of Ontario a 10% rebate on energy. Well, blow me down. Isn't that amazing?

We can't trust that the McGuinty government won't use provisions of this bill to raise taxes further. We cannot support Bill 135, and this side will not do so.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: Bill 135, in terms of this particular budget bill, is interesting because we have members of the NDP, who were originally asking for an 8% reduction on their energy bills, and we're providing a 10% reduction, and that's not good enough. That's bizarre. And now we have members on the Tory side belittling and saying that 10% is nothing. I find that contrast beautiful.

The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock has been saying that we've been able to balance that whole need that we've tried to create in the budget bill, and the Tories and the NDP have taken nothing but glee out of trying to pull it in both directions.

So I personally think, from what I'm hearing from the Tories, going on and spewing about what they do, and the NDP doing what they're doing, we've probably struck the balance and found the right spot that the people of Ontario are looking for.

A disaster that the previous government did in the energy file—they have forgotten what happened before

2003. They don't want to even think that there's history. I wouldn't be surprised if we don't see a private member's bill, the "before 2003 didn't exist" bill, because they don't want to acknowledge that they made this mess. We're fixing it.

I want to thank you for this opportunity to say Bill 135 is a great bill. I look forward to the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, because she's going to set the record straight, like she always does.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I was urged to come in. I was listening to one of the greatest speakers in this Legislature, the member from Thornhill. His passion and his forcefulness and his grasp of the issues say it all. I think it's a classic case of a person who knows what he's speaking about and knows how to speak about what he knows about. I can tell you that the excitement here since his remarks is virtually palpable. You could actually feel the House. He touched a nerve. The House leader is a person who is given to speaking quite often to herself, but nonetheless, she is excited about this. I think she knows that the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, our critic, Mr. Miller, was another person—

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Oh, now he gets around to you.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. They share the file, and they allowed me to sort of play cleanup.

The one thing this bill does or attempts do is to cut your hydro bill by 10%. Now, the 10%—how it works is, first of all, if your hydro bill is, say, \$100, your bill will now be \$100 plus 13%. So it's \$113 because of the tax. If you pay \$13 in tax, they're going to give you 10% back: \$1.00. So they're still making \$3 on your taxes. So you can't have it both ways, as much as they would like it to be seen that way.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: They're saying that I'm wrong. Tell me that the tax isn't 13%. Tell me it isn't 13%. They can't say that. So all I'm doing is reporting.

Now, how unfriendly are they as the government? There's something that the viewers should know. I'd ask you to look up this regulation. The regulation is regulation 440/08. This regulation here is another example of a job-killing, red tape—I'm going to repeat it; the leader may not know about this. It's job-killing; it kills jobs and it kills families. This small business regulation—you'll have to look it up. Actually, the multi-million dollar deals that they make with Samsung, companies in foreign countries—that's not what they're doing. Right here, that regulation actually will require small business to have a site plan for a propane refilling operation and their business. This could be a small family business—a garage, a campground. Now they're going to have to spend thousands and thousands of dollars, when in fact the government could easily have asked the TSSA, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, to do their job. That's all they had to do: to inspect and enforce. But what they did is use the heavy hand of cabinet minutes and regulations to put another business out of business.

How did they get the money, the \$1.3 billion that this 10% cut is going to cost? Where did that money come from? Because they have a deficit of almost \$20 billion. They've decided to give you part of your money back, 10%, and they're actually borrowing it. They're actually borrowing that money by selling the rights for Teranet for 50 years. That's where the money's coming from, so that their deficit doesn't go over \$20 billion.

It's another example. This bill, and that regulation 440—I'd ask the House leader to look it up—it's a job-killer. That's what I've been told by the industry. We have asked two questions in House on it, and they have refused to work with small business. That's a job-killer. At the same time, they're giving \$7 billion to Samsung to build an infrastructure on renewable energy. I can't believe it. Why wouldn't they just try to help the people of Ontario instead of continually sticking their hands in their pockets?

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There's one more example I want to put, Madam Speaker, with your indulgence. The region of Durham is over 600,000 people. What have they done to Durham region? They just stopped a major arterial highway, the 407, right on the main street. The 407 that they, the government here—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: They're stopping that at Simcoe Street in Oshawa, when the promise was made during the—

Hon. Brad Duguid: You just want to sell it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

The member for Durham, go ahead.

Mr. John O'Toole: Now, the Minister of Energy is saying that they want to sell it. You never know. You can't trust them, see? That's what I heard him say.

I'm afraid that they might, in desperation, try to sell a long-term lease of Niagara Falls. Imagine the honeymoon couple, to say, "Look, you're now in a little piece of Spain," or whoever they sell it to. I can't believe the desperation. I sense it over there. I can literally feel it. In my 15 years here—I see a government in decline, and I think the leader, the Premier of the province of Ontario, is certainly running scared.

I can't support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure to join in this debate once again, on Bill 135, and I thought it might be a good idea to start with the name of the bill, just to bring us back to some sense of what this discussion is about. It's the Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act. Ontario's economy is emerging from a global recession, and in order to lessen the impact of this economic downturn, which is global, and the impact it has had on Ontario businesses and families, the McGuinty government has taken action. We've listened carefully to what matters most to the people of Ontario, and we've invested in their priorities, their priorities of health care, education and energy.

Using our Open Ontario plan, we're creating new opportunities for jobs and for economic growth. The fall budget bill moves forward with that plan, and it protects the progress Ontarians have made in our schools and in our hospitals, and we eliminate the deficit caused by the global recession. Working together, we'll continue to create jobs in the short term, and of course, lay the foundation for long-term growth.

As a result of the changes we've made since 2003, our economy has created over 457,000 new jobs. Since the recessionary low in May 2009, Ontario employment has increased by over 217,000 net jobs, regaining 87% of the jobs lost during the recession. That's worth repeating. We've regained 87% of the jobs lost during the recession, and thanks to our government, Ontarians are receiving significant tax relief in the form of targeted tax credits, a reduction in income tax for nine out of 10 people in Ontario.

Over the past seven years, our government has been working to improve the lives of the people of Ontario. We were elected to bring change to the province of Ontario, change from the previous years of neglect to our public services, to our infrastructure, that our families and our economy rely on. We followed through on important legislation to make improvements for Ontario families and businesses and to ensure that we're managing Ontario's finances wisely and responsibly. As a result, our schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, roads and bridges have all been significantly improved.

While these measures are aimed at stimulating the economy and helping to secure Ontario's future over the long term, families and businesses are struggling right now. They're struggling now with higher costs, and they need some help today. That's exactly why the McGuinty government is offering several new tax credits that help put money into people's pockets. These include the children's activity tax credit, the enhanced Ontario energy and property tax credit, and the northern energy credit.

Bill 135, if passed, would provide Ontarians with a new credit, the Ontario clean energy benefit, or the OCEB, which would provide the people of Ontario with significant relief on their electricity costs.

Electricity bills are rising because of the new investments required to ensure that Ontario has a clean, modern and reliable system. The proposed OCEB would reduce electricity bills, including tax, for eligible consumers by 10%, helping more than four million residential consumers and more than 400,000 small businesses and farms. I'll just repeat that: That's reducing electricity bills by 10%. Ten per cent is the equivalent of \$14 million of savings annually for low-income families in Ontario, and this is an estimate by the Social Housing Services Corp.

Mr. Rick Johnson: Who wouldn't vote for that?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Exactly.

The OCEB for a typical residential consumer would be a savings of more than \$150 a year. A typical small business, using 10,000 kilowatt hours per month, would save more than \$1,700 a year, and a farm using 12,000

kilowatt hours per month would save more than \$2,000 a year.

The OCEB would apply each and every month for the next five years. I'll reiterate that because we heard that from the third party—there was a misconception there, and I will just make it clear, on the record, that the OCEB would apply each and every month for the next five years.

I also want to say, as the Progressive Conservatives and—

Interjections.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: The member from Durham has a whole lot to say, Speaker; I know you can hear him.

The official opposition had a complaint about the process. I sat on that committee and I would just say that if the Progressive Conservatives want to be part of the process, they had that opportunity and, in fact, did not submit one amendment.

After the OCEB was presented in the 2010 Ontario economic outlook and fiscal review, the people of Ontario have expressed their enthusiastic support.

Jo-Anne Poirier from Ottawa Community Housing had this to say: "A 10% reduction to our hydro costs would save approximately \$750,000 per year. Not only would this benefit our tenants who pay their utility costs directly, but the savings to Ottawa Community Housing could be reinvested in our housing stock. This would enhance the quality of life for our tenants and further protect our assets"—enhancing the quality of life and protecting assets.

The Electricity Distributors Association is also very supportive of the proposed OCEB, and they had this to say: "The benefit provides some financial relief to our customers while ensuring they will continue to benefit from the important infrastructure investments that are being made to ensure service reliability to all Ontarians now and into the future."

To pave the way for a clean, modern and reliable electricity system that includes renewables and creates jobs, our government has made significant investments, but these necessary investments come with a price. Providing the 10% OCEB to Ontarians is a responsible way of helping Ontario families through the transition to a cleaner electricity system. Ontarians can now rest assured that the days of an unreliable and dirty electricity system under the previous government are over.

While the former government made little investment in new electricity supply and transmission, our government has made the long-overdue investments in electricity system infrastructure to ensure the lights stay on.

Our government's long-term energy plan, phasing out coal-fired generation and replacing it with cleaner generation, is improving the quality of the air we breathe and reducing health care costs. It's also attracting new investments and creating jobs.

Bill 135 also moves forward our plans to modernize financial regulation by protecting consumers and investments, by strengthening regulatory requirements and by adopting flexible and effective regulatory measures which are in step with global development.

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Our government is proposing important amendments to the Ontario Securities Act that would allow the Ontario Securities Commission, or the OSC, to develop and implement a robust regulatory framework for over-the-counter derivatives. These proposed changes are designed to prepare the OSC for its transition to a new Canadian securities regulator and also to help Canada achieve its commitments for international financial reform. In updating the regulation, our government is being consistent with the proposed federal Canadian Securities Act.

We're cognizant of the need to promote stability in the Canadian capital markets during this important transition period. Through the proposed amendments, the Ontario government would provide regulatory leadership, promote fair and efficient capital markets, enhance investor protection and help Canada deliver on its G20 financial reform commitments. This is the right plan at the right time. These reforms would enable the province to modernize financial regulation by strengthening regulatory requirements, adopting flexible and effective global regulatory measures and promoting Ontario as an open and safe market for investors. They would help promote Ontario as a well-regulated and a world-class financial market.

As a result of the global recession, Ontario, like many other jurisdictions in Canada and around the world, has a fiscal deficit. Our government has laid out a realistic, responsible plan to cut the deficit in half within five years of its highest point and to eliminate it in eight years. We are on track for a deficit of \$18.7 billion in 2010-11. This is a \$1-billion improvement over the 2010 budget projection. It's almost 25% lower than the \$24.7-billion deficit projected one year ago. The improvement to the fiscal forecast for 2010-11 is due mainly to an increase in revenue resulting from stronger economic growth and, of course, our government's prudent fiscal management.

Our government remains committed to ongoing expenditure management and has an extensive track record of effectively realizing savings and efficiencies. Our comprehensive review of all government programs and services has identified more than \$260 million in potential savings through both programming and administrative expenditure reductions. Our government has also negotiated the principal terms of the proposed agreement to renew its long-standing business partnership with Teranet.

Teranet was first formed in 1991 as a partnership between the province of Ontario and the private sector to create an electronic land registration system. Under this proposed agreement, Teranet's owners, Borealis Infrastructure, would provide the province with an upfront payment of \$1 billion, which would be used to reduce the province's debt. This debt reduction would decrease Ontario's ongoing borrowing requirements and would save up to \$50 million in annual interest costs. Our government is committed to maximizing the value of government-owned assets while at the same time protecting consumers.

There are clear signs that the Ontario economy is recovering. Our government is on track to meet the medium-term fiscal targets outlined in the 2010 budget. Key indicators have improved from lows posted during the recession. After declining for four consecutive quarters during the recession in 2008-09, Ontario's real GDP has increased for the last four consecutive quarters, rising 3.7%.

To achieve our fiscal targets while protecting public services, our government is managing responsibly and reducing spending. Since taking office, we've reduced consulting expenses by 50% and travel expenses by 26%. We've taken action to restrain compensation in the OPS and the broader public service, helping to redirect about \$2 billion toward sustaining public services over two years. We're leading by example, having extended the pay freeze for members of provincial Parliament to three years from one. We're on track to reduce the size of the Ontario public service by 5% by March 31, 2011.

Ontario has regained 87% of the jobs that were lost during the global recession. That is amazing.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: How many?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Eighty-seven per cent.

Since May 2009, job growth in Ontario has been stronger than in most provinces and significantly above that of the United States as a whole and, of course, most of the US states. While Ontario is a bright spot in an otherwise weak job picture in Canada and in the United States, we're mindful that economic growth is projected to be slower in the coming years, mainly due to slow growth in the US economy. That's why our government continues to allow for new investments that will continue to help grow the economy and new investments that, of course, will continue to create jobs.

The Helping Ontario Families and Managing Responsibly Act is part of our plan to help keep Ontario moving forward. Bill 135 also includes significant relief and support for Ontario families, and significant relief and support for Ontario businesses. We've listened to the people of Ontario. We've heard what the people have to say. They've told us what they need, when they need it, and this bill will do that for them.

For that reason and for all the reasons I've outlined, I would encourage the House to support Bill 135.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? Seeing none, pursuant to the order of the House dated December 1, 2010, I am now required to put the question.

Ms. Smith, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, has moved third reading of Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I've been handed a deferral slip. Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters, will be deferred until deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 FAVORISANT DES COLLECTIVITÉS FORTES GRÂCE AU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 2, 2010, on the motion for second reading Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2010, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 140, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur les services de logement, abrogeant la Loi de 2000 sur la réforme du logement social et apportant des modifications corrélatives et autres à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I am happy to resume the debate on Bill 140. This will not be a walk in the park for service managers. It is truly shocking to me that the government wasn't able to complete the task themselves, so they just passed it on. That says a lot about how tired this government has become. This smacks of a tired government, a government out of ideas.

What happened to their creative plan that was going to take advantage of creative financial options? Oh, wait a minute. There's no money. There can't be any creative financial options. This government has dug Ontario so deep into this hole that they can't be creative financially because they have the largest debt in Ontario's history.

Just a couple of weeks ago this government released their fall economic statement. Ontarians were given the grim news that despite four quarters of consecutive economic growth, this government has only reduced the deficit by a mere 3%, from \$19.3 billion in 2009 to a projected \$18.7 billion this year. Ontarian's astronomical 2010 deficit is projected to be \$18.7 billion. The deficits of every other province combined would only equal \$12.4 billion, leaving Ontario's 2010 deficit \$6.3 billion greater than the rest of Canada combined. By comparison, the 2010 deficit for Quebec is \$4.5 billion; for British Columbia, it is \$1.4 billion. Ontarians have to suffer through an \$18.7-billion deficit.

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This government has no excuses. They had three years to put together an affordable housing plan, and they had three years to do the cost calculations and set aside some much-needed funding for affordable housing. They just didn't do it.

Under this government, Ontario has fallen, and fallen hard. The poorest and most vulnerable have fallen the hardest. As the members opposite know, under their watch, we have become a have-not province, expecting handouts from other provinces.

This government has had a real opportunity to make a difference, and they should have done it with this long-term affordable housing strategy, given the economic downturn and the many job losses. Of all the times that Ontarians needed assistance with respect to affordable

housing, the need has never been greater. This government has once again failed, and failed miserably. They didn't capitalize on this opportunity by any stretch of the imagination. They haven't provided for Ontarians who are on the social housing waiting list. There are almost 142,000 of these folks. They haven't given them one bit of help with this long-term affordable housing report or with the legislation that accompanied it. Neither their report nor this legislation will make a difference to eliminate or even reduce the housing waiting list.

This government has, however, put a lot of time and thought into new taxes and fees, and we all, as Ontarians, have to pay them. Let me tell you: They have repealed the corporate income tax cuts; they've cancelled scheduled personal income tax cuts; they've repealed the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, 2003; they've raised tobacco taxes; they've delisted eye examinations, chiropractic and physiotherapy services from OHIP; they brought in the Ontario health premium; they brought in the Toronto land transfer tax, the Toronto vehicle registration fees, and their latest hit to the wallet, the harmonized sales tax, the beloved HST; as well, Ontario tire stewardship fees, eco fees, and the municipal hazardous or special waste program, the electronics tax—and this list can go on and on and on.

Even with all those additional taxes and fees, this government could not put aside a little bit of funding for affordable housing.

Let's not forget that this government has had a hand in getting Ontarians to where we are today. Let me talk a bit about Ontario's unemployment rate. At present, it stands at about 8.6%. That is higher than the national average in Canada, which is 7.9%. It's higher than that of Russia, which is 6.6%, of South Korea at 3.7%, and of Argentina at 7.6%. How about Brazil at 6.2% or Mexico at 5.7%? And that list goes on and on.

This government blames Ontario's job situation on the global economic downturn. How many times have we heard that? Yet Ontario's unemployment rate has surpassed Canada's national average every single month since January 2007—almost two full years before we saw the financial crisis. Even prior to the economic collapse, Ontario had lost a net 208,000 manufacturing jobs. In effect, Ontario has acted as a ball and chain on Canada's wealth creation for the last three and a half years. Ontario lost a net 141,000 jobs last year alone. Last summer, Ontario's unemployment rate hit a 16-year high. Under this government, Ontario has lost 295,000 manufacturing jobs. That's a decline of 28%.

Additionally, since 2005, Ontario's population has grown by 500,000 people. That means that the provincial economy must add at least 100,000 jobs per year, on average, just to keep up with the immigration population growth. These figures are very alarming. Ontarians are struggling, and yet this government has done nothing to help those in need by providing some new affordable housing options.

Ontario is moving at a snail's pace in recovering from the recession in comparison to other jurisdictions. In the

five years preceding the recession, from 2003 to 2008, the standard of living grew at a slower pace in Ontario than anywhere else in Canada. In the five years preceding the recession, we should have been higher. Ontario has a lower standard of living than California, than Illinois, than Ohio, than Indiana, than Michigan—and we could keep going on and on with that list, too. Under this government, Ontario's provincial wealth, the real GDP, has grown at a slower rate than anywhere outside the Atlantic provinces. I want to point out that during the previous Ontario PC government's tenure in office, Ontario led all of North America in wealth creation.

Many Ontarians do not need long-term housing assistance. Many just need a little assistance until they get back up on their feet—assistance like a housing benefit. This government is more than aware of the benefits of a housing benefit, and they even go as far as to make mention of it under their Building Foundations: Building Futures report. Let me quote to you from that report: "During consultations, some of our partners proposed creating an Ontario housing benefit to help low-income Ontarians pay rent. Current financial challenges do not allow us to proceed to implement such a program at this time."

Well, what kind of cost calculation has this government done to determine the cost of not having a housing benefit? Poor housing is directly linked to poor health. Has this government taken that into consideration? We all know that our current health care system is stretched to the max under this government as well.

Housing benefits seem to work in other jurisdictions. The province of British Columbia, for example, has a program. Their program has about 15,000 seniors enrolled and about 5,000 families. The total cost is about \$45 million. The province of Manitoba has about 2,000 seniors enrolled and about 1,000 families. Their cost is about \$3.2 million. Now Quebec, which is considered to be sort of the gold standard with respect to a housing benefit program, has about 129,000 seniors and families enrolled. The total annual budget is about \$90 million. This government spent, let me tell you, \$185 million on their failed rental opportunities for Ontario families program, more commonly known as ROOF. Just think what that money could have done, had it been used properly.

Let's not forget the monies that this government has wasted with their failed energy experiments and their \$1-billion eHealth scandal. One billion dollars of waste and we still don't have electronic health records, and we have no money to put into the housing benefit. This is truly shameful.

Ontarians know about the government's waste. They are more than aware of the \$1-billion eHealth scandal, so the government's woes about not having money for the housing benefit don't fly with Ontarians. Perhaps if this government had not given millions of dollars to their Liberal consultant friends, they would have had some money to put into the housing benefit. Perhaps their Building Foundations: Building Futures report and this

piece of legislation should have had a little footnote saying, “Sorry, Ontario, we choose our Liberal consultant friends”—who already make \$300 an hour—“over providing you with a roof above your head.” There is a difference between being a cash-strapped government because you have successful programs that come with a price tag and being the government that mismanaged Ontarians’ hard-working tax dollars and now there is nothing left.

I want to talk a little bit about the affordable housing plan and what it should look like. Housing is a balance. It really requires a plan with balance. It is not a one-size-fits-all model.

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As I mentioned before, I do give the government credit for somewhat recognizing this and allowing service managers to work with funds as they see fit within the five homelessness programs. The answer to an affordable housing plan isn’t bricks and mortar. The answer isn’t only planning for the building of new affordable housing units. The answer isn’t solely providing a housing benefit or subsidies. It also isn’t providing no assistance at all.

This plan has no commitment to new provincial operating or capital dollars for housing. It merely promises to “engage the federal government.” This is a shot in the dark because, as we already know, the federal government has made it perfectly clear that they are stepping out of the housing business. This isn’t new news.

In 2009, the Ontario Auditor General called on the housing ministry to develop a plan to deal with the federal “step-out,” something we are still waiting for. Maybe they will just pass that one on to the service managers as well. They’ve just had seven years to work something out within this plan, and they’ve wasted that time. They have had more than enough input from Ontarians and industry specialists.

Prior to the release of this report, the Housing Network of Ontario released five key tests of success for Ontario’s long-term housing strategy. Let me run through these important tests.

“Test one: Bold targets and sustained funding:

“A long-term affordable housing strategy must ensure an adequate supply of quality, affordable housing for Ontarians, supported by multi-year financial commitments....

“Test two: A solid measuring stick:

“An effective housing strategy requires a solid foundation of accurate evidence about the scale of housing insecurity and homelessness in Ontario and a clear way to measure progress....

“Test three: Accountability:

“Ontario’s long-term affordable housing strategy needs to be kept on track, and the plan must remain accountable to the people it intends to serve....

“Test four: Make housing truly affordable and accessible:

“All Ontarians should be able to access housing they can afford, and supports should be provided to ensure equitable thriving, inclusive communities....

“Test five: Reform housing legislation to build stronger communities....”

Although the Housing Network of Ontario acknowledges that there are some important changes in this plan, they feel that, overall, the plan falls short of the five key tests that they set out.

According to Wellesley Institute, “The Ontario government has put up the scaffolding for a long-term affordable housing strategy, but there’s plenty of unfinished business for Queen’s Park as it seeks to build a truly comprehensive plan to ensure everyone has access to a healthy, affordable home.”

They also say, “Housing experts agreed that a key element of any long-term affordable housing plan for Ontario is specific targets and timelines for new affordable homes, and accountability for results. There is no commitment in the plan released yesterday to fund a single new unit of affordable rental or ownership housing.”

Additionally, the Wellesley Institute says, “While today’s plan devotes a section to ‘accountability’ and a second section to ‘measuring results’, without specific targets and timelines, it is not clear what the Ontario government is promising to be accountable to, and what results it is measuring.”

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario says, “AMO recognizes that good policy and planning can only go so far. New funding is needed. The government does contribute approximately \$450 million annually to affordable housing,” but the need is far greater. “AMO anticipates that as the economy improves, the government will commit to funding their strategy and addressing the growing affordable housing pressures in Ontario with new funding.”

The Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association says, “While the strategy includes a focus on streamlining some administrative aspects of the rent/geared-to-income housing system and increased flexibility for both local communities and tenants, it does not address the critical need for increased investment in new development and the ongoing maintenance of existing properties—key public assets that must be protected for future generations.”

The ONPHA says, “We do thank this government for the significant investments in housing it has made in recent years and we recognize that the current economic situation has posed many challenges for them. However, the potential of any strategy cannot be fully realized unless it is properly funded.... We would encourage the government to continue providing even limited funding in this current economic climate and to adopt some of the innovative financing solutions that the community-based housing sector will be proposing.”

The Ontario Municipal Social Services Association also had something to say:

“OMSSA believes the shift in perspective towards human services integration throughout the strategy, which speaks of affordable housing being provided ‘in a supportive environment that includes access to jobs, community facilities, and services,’ is consistent and

supportive of the positions it has advocated on behalf of members over the past several years. Moving to client-centered approach to housing over the current program-focused approach, which is restrictive, is also consistent with OMSSA's positions."

They continue on to say, "OMSSA is encouraging the government to consider the negative long-term impacts of not investing additional resources into the housing sector. Ontarians in need of appropriate and affordable housing will continue to be in need without new investment to expand the affordable housing stock in Ontario. The federal government has an equally important role to play and OMSSA will continue to work with municipal and provincial partners to encourage federal action in providing renewed flexible funding and developing the policy framework for a national housing strategy."

Further to my earlier point, this government has failed to produce a full plan. This piece of legislation proposes an amendment to the Planning Act, 1990, to require municipalities to establish policies allowing second units in new and existing developments. This will be valuable for not only tenants but for homeowners as well. For a tenant, it can offer a more affordable housing option, as a secondary suite is often a basement apartment in a home. For a homeowner, it can offer an additional income to offset their mortgage. Additionally, this can be a benefit for an elderly parent, so they can remain close to family and close to support.

I know that the Ontario Home Builders' Association was certainly happy to see this included in the legislation. They said, "Secondary suites offer a valuable opportunity to create a new supply of affordable housing in both new and existing communities for seniors, students and families."

I also want to make note that the OHBA says, "Secondary suites also present an opportunity to reduce the strain on the health care systems when aging parents can move in with their children to provide them with security, care and privacy" and dignity. Obviously, anything that reduces the overwhelming strain on our health care system is beneficial. Who can argue with that?

It is kind of interesting, though, that poor housing is directly linked to poor health. Since this legislation doesn't set out a plan for Ontario's affordable housing problems to ensure better health for Ontarians, at least allowing secondary units contributes to some health care.

I want to paint a bit of a picture of what we have in Ontario today. Today, we have one in five Ontarians paying more than 50% of their income on rent. The affordable housing advocacy network says that this puts these Ontarians in danger of becoming homeless. That is over 500,000 households paying more than 50% of their income on shelter costs. Ideally, one shouldn't be paying more than 30% of income on shelter costs. However, in Ontario, we have over 1.2 million households paying over 30% of their income on shelter costs. These are not good numbers. These figures are very concerning.

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Social housing, which is housing that charges rent geared to income, is a very limited resource. It represents

only 5% of total housing stock in Ontario and 18% of the rental units. As I've already mentioned, the social housing wait-lists in Ontario are long and they are growing. They're growing longer every day. Overall, social housing is slow to respond to long-term need. That is why this plan needed to include some other options.

So let's talk about the wait-list numbers in Ontario. At the beginning of 2010, there were 141,635 households on the municipal waiting list for affordable housing. The number of households looking for assisted housing across Ontario has grown significantly by 12,382 households, and now the number stands at 154,017. That's from January 2009. That's an increase of 9.6% just in one year. In 2004, shortly after this government was elected, the wait-list stood at 126,103. You can do the math. This is quite the increase. And let me be clear: The wait-list continues to grow.

According to Toronto Community Housing, 60,197 households in the city of Toronto are on the active wait-list. This represents 43% of all the active households in the province, even though Toronto represents only 20.6% of the population of Ontario.

Between 2007 and 2009, the active wait-list for social housing grew by 22%. Today, more than 55,000 of the 61,500 total households on the waiting list have requested units. Only about 4,000 households move into housing each year.

The region of Peel has 14,436 households, or 10% of the total active households, on the waiting list for Ontario. As of the December 31, 2009, there were almost 2,000 eligible participants on the waiting list in Halton region.

Earlier this year, the ONPHA's executive director, Sharad Kerur, stated, "While the recession in Ontario appears to be easing, low- and modest-income households continue to struggle when it comes to finding an affordable home.... In the years ahead, unemployment will remain significant and housing affordability problems will likely become an even bigger issue in many Ontario communities."

Harvey Cooper, who is manager of government relations at CHF Canada in the Ontario region, has said, "Accessing a suitable home is out of reach for many average working people in the service industry and manufacturing. Many of these workers will be forced to make tough choices—pay rent they cannot afford or leave their community. This has negative implications for themselves, their families"—especially their children—"and the local economy."

Ontario is in desperate need of change when it comes to the approach to dealing with affordable housing. I mentioned that the government's long-term affordable housing plan doesn't include a housing benefit. I want to elaborate on this government's past attempt at a housing-related income program.

Interjection.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: The ROOF program is what we're going to talk about, and there is currently no housing-related income program to help Ontarians in

need. The flawed and failed rental opportunities for Ontario families program, or ROOF, is considered to be a first attempt to address the need for a housing-related income program. As I mentioned, there really is no hope that a second attempt is on the horizon as the government's long-term affordable housing plan only mentions that an Ontario housing benefit is not an option at this time and that it's due to these current financial challenges.

Several industry experts have spent valuable time and resources composing a proposal for a housing benefit. Sometimes it costs more to do nothing than it does to come up with a good plan. The government is, I am sure, more than familiar with this report, entitled A Housing Benefit for Ontario. The government appears to have overlooked the tremendous value that this crucial report by industry experts has for Ontario. This idea for a housing benefit is also one solution for a poverty reduction strategy. This is an idea that is supported by industry organizations like the Federation of Rental-Housing Providers of Ontario, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, the Metcalf Foundation, the Greater Toronto Apartment Association and the Daily Bread Food Bank. The government sort of took a step in this direction with their rental opportunity for Ontario families program; however, as we all know, that program was less than successful, and they ended up having to change it and shift the money to the municipal service managers.

Let me give anyone who isn't familiar with the ROOF program just a little bit of background. The ROOF program was announced first in July 2007. The government allocated \$185 million towards the program, which was designed to provide a housing allowance of \$100 a month to low-income working families who were struggling with housing affordability in our province. Registration in the program began in August 2007; it ended in June 2008.

To be eligible for ROOF, a family needed to meet the following criteria: They had to work and have an earned income of at least \$5,000 and an adjusted family net income of below \$20,000; have one or more dependent children under the age of 18; be a renter household paying more than 30% of income towards their rent; have less than \$10,000 in liquid assets; not be receiving social assistance or other government shelter assistance; be a resident in Ontario; and have appropriate status in Canada.

The eligibility criteria certainly left many Ontarians out. What about all the other Ontarians who were struggling but didn't have a dependent child or didn't fit into one or the other of these categories? On September 15, 2010, the Toronto Star revealed that Ontario is quietly—famous for this, doing things quietly—tweaking its ROOF program for low-income families because not enough people signed up for the 2007 initiative. Well, it didn't fit the program. According to the member from Etobicoke Centre, the remaining \$50 million would be spent on a new program that will allow monthly benefits of up to \$300 and serve a broader range of vulnerable people.

Well, why didn't the government learn from the flawed ROOF program and reinstitute a housing benefit that would help all Ontarians in their time of need in this legislation, and put it in the plan as well? I say "time of need" because I want to be clear that just because an individual receives the housing benefit doesn't mean they will receive it indefinitely. Take, for example, a hard-working Ontarian who loses their job, which we have seen a lot under this government, and they may need some temporary assistance to keep up with paying the rent while still allowing them to have the basic necessities of life. But that hard-working individual will eventually get back on their feet, and then they won't need the housing benefit any more.

This is a far better alternative than getting on the current social housing waiting list, waiting for years—in some cases it could be 20 years—and then having to relocate. With a benefit, they can stay in their own home, be in a home that is close to their work or their children's school or whatever the case may be. It offers them so much more. It allows them the comfort and confidence to get back up on their feet, and that's what Ontarians need.

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There are vacant units out there right now that someone could be living in with the help of a housing benefit. Rental housing providers in Ontario have empty units all across this province. Members of the FRPO have 22,000 vacant units in Ontario. That is 22,000 units that this government could tap into to create some affordable housing.

This piece of legislation is making changes to the rent-geared-to-income program. Instead of individuals having to declare their income changes as they happen, which often results in immediate rent increases, they will now only have to report once a year. It's a step in the right direction, but a baby step.

As we all know, the current system often acts as a deterrent for individuals to work extra hours, as those extra hours are automatically clawed back from their pay. A system like that never lets these individuals get back on their feet because they can truly never get ahead. The change to the rent-geared-to-income program will allow them now to make their increased income for a year before having to declare it. This gives them time to save and prepare for their rent increase or to be on their own without assistance.

At the same time, one of the first questions I asked was, what happens in cases where an individual's income decreases? I am told that there will be special circumstances to deal with extreme income increases or income decreases, so that an individual wouldn't be forced to wait for the year-reporting process in order to get more rent assistance.

So here we see the government take a baby step, but they haven't really gone far enough.

I think what's happened here is that we have another plan to have a plan. I really think that a lot more was expected from this government's long-term affordable housing plan and also this almost 100 pages of legislation.

Let's not forget that affordable housing was a large part of Ontario's poverty reduction strategy, yet another long-anticipated report that lacked any real initiative and is surely sitting somewhere on a shelf collecting dust right now. They'd better make room right next to that report on the shelf, so that the poverty reduction strategy and the long-term affordable housing strategy can sit next to each other, because it sets out to do much of the same things over the long run: a whole lot of nothing.

As the members opposite know, the success of the poverty reduction strategy was basically dependent, again, on federal funding, similar to this piece of legislation and the coinciding report. Again, federal funding is a key component of its success. This is a regular tactic of this government: blame somebody else. However, we see right through it. This government is well aware that the federal government is getting out of the business of housing. How many times does this government need to hear that?

Their report even has a graph showing that the federal government will reduce funding to zero. Take a look at the report. This is just another blame game exercise, so that when this long-term affordable housing report fails, this government can then point fingers again, this time at the federal government, and say, "It was their fault."

It's not like the federal government hasn't given the Ontario government ample notice that the funding will be reduced and eliminated. This government continues to ignore that piece of advice.

It is really unfortunate that this government continues to put so much emphasis on their plans and, then, when released, we all seem to have a feeling of disappointment because the plans don't achieve what they were anticipated to achieve.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my time, this bill was not made available to our stakeholders until almost noon on November 30, almost a full day after it had been introduced. It is almost 100 pages and it is a new bill, so it cannot even really be compared to the previous bill. This, of course, makes it more complex and more time-consuming for everyone to review it, and that includes all of our stakeholders.

It always makes me wonder when a bill is introduced with very little time for it to be reviewed, and the government moves quickly to get it on the table. What's the rush? What is the government trying to slip by? What is being hidden? Is there something hidden here that we don't want anybody to pick up on? It surely isn't that they have suddenly decided that the changes that this bill brings forward are urgent because, otherwise, they would have brought this long-term affordable housing plan and this piece of legislation forward as planned, last spring or even before. There's been ample notice, and there's been a lot of jiggery-pokery.

As I have mentioned a few times now, this bill will not—it will not—get all those that are currently on the waiting list into housing. Whether this bill passes or not, far too many Ontarians will still remain on that wait-list.

I'm sure that, as we continue to debate this bill, our stakeholders will have amendments and suggestions as to

how we can strengthen this bill, what needs to be changed and what needs to be included. I hope the government will listen and not use their overwhelming majority, once again, to rush this legislation without appropriate hearings.

As always, it is my understanding that much detail is still to come in the regulations as well. We will, of course, be watching that, too. We are all too familiar with the fact that this government often introduces legislation that is only ever really completed once the regulations come into effect. The devil is in the detail. This, of course, makes it easier for the government to slip things in without the scrutiny of anyone—not the public, not the opposition.

I think that this just about wraps up my comments for today, but I do want to say that I am happy that we have finally seen the government's plan and the government's bill. I hope that the government is listening closely to the concerns of industry experts who are saying that the plan is incomplete and that there is still much to do.

I hope that they will stop mismanaging Ontario's finances so that we can afford to invest in a valuable program such as a housing benefit that many vulnerable Ontarians need. And I certainly hope that this government is there to support the service managers as they now try to go through the gruelling task of preparing a 10-year housing plan and that this government takes the advice of the Auditor General and prepares their own plan to deal with the federal government's step-out with respect to housing funding.

In our communities, we're only as strong as the most vulnerable amongst us, and I think we have to remember that when we work to put these plans together.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for the time, and I hope that the government listens to some of the things that we're suggesting.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm delighted to be able to make a couple of comments, first and foremost to say thank you to the member from Burlington, because in the seven years I have spent in this House, I actually think that is the first time that you have talked about housing across the way. I cannot remember a question coming from the leader ever, but I do think one or two may have come from a member in seven years. So it's thrilling to have somebody who's put this on their agenda. This is important.

I wanted to make sure that there was a clear understanding, however, around the service managers. I, too, would like to put a quote on the record. This is from Kira Heineck, who is executive director of the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association: "The Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, which represents social services staff in municipalities across Ontario, applauds the shift away from a paternalistic approach towards one that respects municipal service managers and reflects the leadership role we've played in our communities for many years."

I know that this is particularly important so that we do get the record straight. I understand, from the member from Burlington, that it is difficult to inhale and exhale on some of these issues. At one point you are concerned about the fact that there is an \$18-billion deficit, but then on the other hand you want us to put more money into social services for housing above the \$430 million—half a billion dollars, almost—that we currently do.

There is no question that there is more that needs to be done, but what we did do was sit down with the people whom this impacts the most, the providers, the people who put people into the different shelters and into the homes. We talked to them extensively in 13 communities across Ontario to try to understand what their issues were and then to reflect it in the bill.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a great opportunity to be here today; to be able to add my voice to Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2010, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts.

This bill is about 85 pages long. It's actually one of the longer bills we've seen in this Legislature in a while; since they rammed through the HST. That said, my colleague from Burlington, our critic for municipal affairs and housing, gave a very fine speech. I think she outlined some of the concerns we have with the bill and other elements where we think it's passable. I want to commend her because, as you know, the MPP from Burlington comes to this Legislature with a vast skill set and experience from her time working in Burlington and at the region of Halton.

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm not quite sure why that's getting a rise out of my colleagues opposite, but I guess they understand that there are few people in this Legislature more equipped to talk about municipal affairs and housing than the member from Burlington. She has done a great job. She has worked very hard since her arrival here, and I believe that was the year of 2006.

Interjection: It was 2007.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Oh, 2007. It was just after my colleague from Whitby–Oshawa and I had joined this chamber.

In any event, she has been advocating for our municipalities and for social housing since she has arrived here, much to the chagrin, of course, of the Liberal government, because when she speaks, she speaks forcefully and with a great degree of knowledge on these issues.

So I want to commend her on how she approached Bill 140. The Progressive Conservative caucus will continue to look at this bill and make our determinations.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I too want to commend the member for Burlington for a thoroughgoing survey of the issues before us.

As you may well be aware, there are many people in desperate, dire situations in this province who need social housing. I have talked to people who live in basement apartments that flood; who put their names on waiting lists and know that they will wait many years, if not decades, before they're actually able to get into housing. I talk to people who live in older non-profit housing projects whose incomes, on pensions, have not gone up at the same rate as inflation; who are desperately in need of rent geared to income or rent supplement.

There is no question that people in this province need a comprehensive, thoroughgoing, very strong social housing initiative on the part of this government. Unfortunately, we will not be seeing this out of this bill. The bill addresses some issues that I will touch on in my allocated time but doesn't deal with the larger problem of a gross insufficiency of affordable housing for seniors, for the disabled, for the poor and frankly, in many cases, for those who are trying to get along on minimum wage.

When you look at people's lives, when you examine those things that allow them to live with dignity, allow them to build their relationships with others, one of the anchors of that is affordable, secure, safe housing. Our failure in this province, the failure of the McGuinty government in this province to address that issue is a very, very substantial problem, one that, unfortunately, this bill will only touch in a tangential way.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: There are certain times when you agree with the members opposite. I'm just going to make a comment to the member from Nepean–Carleton, who referred to the member from Burlington, saying that she knows. I agree with her: The member from Burlington knows. She knows that in the seven years we've been here, social housing was never part of their agenda. She also knows that their party, prior to 2003, cancelled the creation of 17,000 units. They declared a moratorium on non-profit social housing. They stated publicly that they wanted to get out of the business of building affordable housing. So, yes, she knows.

She was in municipal government, like I was, when the previous government downloaded, downloaded, downloaded, downloaded. We couldn't even keep up.

Let me tell you a few things that have happened since 2003, when they abandoned social housing by downloading it. We've invested some \$2.5 billion—\$2.5 billion—in social housing. We built 22,000 new units for families, with more than 150,000 repairs to existing units and more than 35,000 rental supplements. Those are the ones she was speaking about who need a little bit of a hand up to get out of the rut.

We did have a federal partner, and they walked away. They totally didn't assume any responsibility. So how easily we forget. But I hope they will come back on board and support us in this legislation to move us forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Burlington has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'd like to thank the members from Etobicoke Centre, Nepean-Carleton, Toronto-Danforth and Northumberland-Quinte West for commenting on my speech.

I have asked questions in this House on housing. You know what happened? There was uproarious laughter on that side of the House. They did not take seriously what I was asking, or they did not take seriously who I was asking the question on behalf of. That was the 142,000 folks on the waiting list. That list, after this report and after this bill is passed with your huge majority, is not going to change.

There is no plan. The plan has been handed off to the service managers in this province. They are the folks that have been charged now with delivering a plan. Do you know why? Because this government is tired, they're out of ideas, and they couldn't come up with a plan. No matter how much advice they received from the very, very, very long consultation process that they had, they could not come up with enough ideas to formulate a plan.

This document that has been tabled is incomplete. It has no funding attached to it. It requires funding from the federal government. It smacks of a tired, unimaginative, out-of-ideas government. No one in this province is going to be helped through this plan, least of all the communities that are charged now with the responsibility of doing this provincial government's work.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'd ask for unanimous consent to stand down the lead by our critic, Cheri DiNovo, and I will speak a short rotation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has asked for unanimous consent to stand down the lead. Agreed? Thank you.

The member has the floor.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Madam Speaker and members of the House.

Speaker, as you're well aware and as people in this chamber are well aware, there is an ongoing housing crisis in Ontario. There's a book released this week, Persistent Poverty: Voices from the Margins, that outlines the extent of that housing crisis. I address this so that when we debate this bill, Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2010, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts, we will do it in full knowledge of the context, the social and daily reality that people are dealing with in Ontario around housing, because it's only when you understand that larger reality that you can actually orient yourself properly and deal with this bill, address it in a way that the people of Ontario expect us to address it.

1730

Speaker, 1.3 million Ontario households are precariously housed. That is, they pay more than 30% of their income on housing—1.3 million households. That is a huge number of people who on a daily and monthly basis find themselves squeezed hard by the expense of the

housing that they absolutely must have in this country and in this climate. There are 120,000 Ontario families who live in overcrowded housing. As you are well aware, Speaker, and as others here are aware, overcrowding leads to conflict within families; it leads to transmission of contagious disease. In fact, it has always been noted in public health journals as a significant problem when it comes to the transmission of airborne disease. Overcrowding undermines the stability of families. It undermines people's dignity.

Eighty thousand Ontarians live in substandard housing that requires major repairs—80,000. I've had an opportunity from time to time to see some of the housing that people live in that's referred to as substandard: closets; housing where every rainstorm is an occasion for leaks, for damage of property, for anxiety.

There are 140,000 households on affordable housing waiting lists in Ontario, a number that has increased by 10% from 2009 to 2010. I have had some of those families come into my office, families facing financial crisis, families facing internal crises between different members of those households because they don't know how to hold their families together in the face of relentless pressure, financial pressure for housing they can't afford. These are people who know that it will be years, if not decades, before they are offered a place to live that they can afford.

Those realities—1.3 million households in precarious housing, 120,000 families in overcrowded housing, 80,000 in substandard housing, 140,000 households on the waiting list—those are the realities that cry out for real action on housing in this province.

Housing insecurity is rising because energy costs have gone up 50% in the past decade. The failure of this government to invest in a very substantial way in energy conservation and efficiency has driven up the cost of housing, has deepened a social problem that already had substantial depth.

The reality in Ontario is that rents have increased faster than inflation, and income of tenants has stagnated or declined. You know, Speaker, if you have gone and talked to your constituents, to seniors on CPP and old age security, how they've seen virtually no increase in their income and how they come and ask, "Can you do something to deal with pensions?" Or if you deal with injured workers trying to live on WSIB payments, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board payments, this year they're getting a 0.5% increase in their payments. If I remember correctly, the guideline rent increase is in the 2% range. Their incomes cannot keep up with inflation and they cannot keep up with increases in rent. Every year that makes it more and more difficult for those who are trying to hold on to their housing.

People on Ontario Works or ODSP are similarly squeezed, some of them in social and affordable housing but many of them trying to make ends meet in the private market, and they can't make ends meet. They are in great, profound difficulty. That's a reality over this past decade. Half of renters do not have enough income to pay

for housing and other necessities such as food, medicine, transportation, education and so on. My guess is that everyone in this chamber who has sat in their constituency office and met with their constituents has dealt with the phone calls and has had to listen to the desperate pleas of those who are squeezed relentlessly by the cost of housing and forced relentlessly to make extraordinarily difficult and unpleasant choices between food and rent, between medicine and rent, between looking after their children and paying their rent. Those are not pleasant choices. Those are very difficult and painful choices, ones that too many Ontarians are having to make.

The authors of the book *Persistent Poverty* spoke to hundreds of people struggling with poverty and insecure housing from across Ontario, people like Jacob, a young man from Toronto, who said at a recent community meeting held by the interfaith coalition on social assistance, "A bachelor apartment costs \$600, maybe \$700 a month in Parkdale. Rooming houses are terrible. People steal your food, mess up the bathroom, get drunk, bring friends home.... How do I pay a high rent on my ODSP of \$1,092 a month? It would be worse if I were on the \$585 from Ontario Works. Am I supposed to steal?"

What does happen when people can't pay their rent and buy food at the same time? You know very well that when people are desperate, when their security is undermined, when they are not eating regularly, they will do things they would not normally want to do. People beg; some people steal.

The failure to address the housing question is one that undermines the well-being of the whole population, not just those who can't get the housing but those who are affected by the fallout from that reality, people like Harry, a middle-aged man from Brantford, who said, "If I can become homeless, there is not another person in the world who can't become homeless. Even people who are wealthy are very close to being in poverty—one death, one broken relationship, one loss of a job. There are not a lot of choices for housing, and it often means living next to people who are smoking ... crack."

I used to be on Toronto city council and had an opportunity to talk to those who were homeless, who were being appointed to boards of homeless shelters in the city of Toronto. I had the opportunity to talk to a man who had had a very responsible job working for a municipality in southern Ontario as a senior person in a police department. His loss of his relationship led to a number of bad decisions, a number of decisions that forced him out of his job and ultimately onto the street. By the time I had seen him, he'd dealt with his addictions, had put himself back on his feet, and at that time, luckily enough, was able to get some housing and re-establish his life. But I say to you, there are too many people who are really one incident away from losing their homes, losing the foundation for their lives and being thrown into chaos.

I had the opportunity the other night at a social event to talk to a young woman who had been in and out of mental institutions—a very pleasant young woman and a

very lucky young woman because she'd been able to find a spot in a supportive housing residence in my riding. Here's a woman who knew many people in her circumstances who were living on the street, trying to keep warm in shelters at night, struggling with mental illness, trying to hold it all together. Those people, who can be our sisters and our brothers, our sons and daughters, deserve the provision of housing so that no one, through illness, is forced onto the street—not physical illness, not mental illness. The reality in this province is that too many people, through illness and misfortune, are forced onto the street or into grossly inadequate, grossly unaffordable housing. That has to be addressed.

1740

What's the record of this government on housing? This government talks about their historic investments in housing. Well, then, let's look at the history. In 2003, the McGuinty government promised to build 20,000 new affordable housing units in three years. That was in 2003. As of October this year, seven years later, the government has still only funded 15,000 and built 11,500. So they've not even kept the promises from their first term in office. In other words, the McGuinty government has funded about 1,900 units a year, about one fifth of the 10,000 units a year that housing groups say is needed to make a dent in homelessness and underhousing. Now they're standing by while federal funding is reduced.

In 2009, the Auditor General called for the Ontario housing ministry to develop a plan to deal with the federal phase-out of funding. That was 2009. The government had notice. It understood that a change was coming about. It understood that that change was going to have a substantial negative impact on the people of Ontario. The McGuinty government still does not have a plan to deal with that phase-out. In fact, operating funds in the budget for housing were cut by \$187 million this year. That was a budget that had been stagnant from 2003. So, in the face of an ongoing and, in fact, developing crisis in housing, little has been done, and most recently, less is being done.

The reality is that, today, in 2010, after seven years of time for the McGuinty government to do something, the housing crisis continues in Ontario. In fact, the housing crisis in Ontario is the worst of any province in Canada. Just to note, the largest province, historically the most powerful, the richest province, has a housing crisis worse than any other province in Canada.

According to the Wellesley Institute, which is one of the most respected sources of information on housing, Ontario has the highest housing costs of any province. In Toronto, one in three households spends 30% or more of their income on housing. That's the worst record among metropolitan areas across Canada. That is a very disturbing and a very difficult reality for the people who live in this city.

High housing costs force individuals and families to choose between paying rents and mortgages or paying for necessities such as food, medicine, energy, child care, transportation, clothing, education—a range of necessities.

According to the Daily Bread Food Bank, high housing costs are the number one reason why visits to food banks in Toronto cracked the one-million mark last year for the first time ever. And more: A record number of Ontarians visited food banks in 2010; 400,000 in the month of March alone. That's a lot of people lining up at food banks, places where people don't want to be, places where people get only a small portion of their food needs addressed.

Ontario also has the worst record among all the provinces in terms of affordable housing investment. Last year, again using Wellesley Institute numbers based on Statistics Canada data, Ontario spent \$64 per capita on affordable housing, only half the provincial average of \$115 per person. On a per capita basis, the government of Saskatchewan spent almost four times as much. Why is it that the province of Saskatchewan spends so much more on housing than Ontario, which has been the powerhouse of Canada's economy? Why is it that we care so much less about our fellow citizens? Why is it that we do so much less to make sure that people are properly housed?

Worse, the government of Ontario has downloaded more affordable housing costs than any other Canadian province. Cash-strapped Ontario municipalities lack the revenues to meet the growing housing needs across the province. Lack of access to affordable housing is an affront to the dignity of Ontarians.

The experience in the 1930s was a sobering one for Canadians. At that time, the provision of support for those who were poor was left to individual municipalities, and we all know the outcome of that approach. Municipalities were pushed to the point of bankruptcy. There was hostility to anyone coming into a municipality looking for support because people knew their municipality was already hard-pressed financially.

Coming out of that experience, Canadians learned that it was senior levels of government that had to address those social issues, that had the fiscal resources, the financial base to actually address those issues, that had the ability to ensure that no one municipality became responsible for dealing with the social issues that all municipalities were struggling with.

In this province of Ontario, that history has been forgotten. Those lessons have been ignored. Right now, after seven years of McGuinty government, the downloading imposed on municipalities for housing continues in full force and effect, meaning that people don't get the housing they need; meaning that municipalities face financial crises that they cannot get out of; meaning, in the end, that Ontarians face a poorer future and a more difficult reality than they should.

Absolutely, there is need for action. Access to safe and secure housing has to be seen as a human right. The lack of affordable housing in Ontario is no less than an assault on the human rights of citizens. That was the conclusion of a 2009 report by the United Nations special rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, after he toured Canada and found that housing rights are being eroded here.

It is of consequence that the social fabric of this province is being damaged, that the lives of people are being

compromised, that this government is not acting as it has a moral responsibility to act in dealing with housing.

This bill, which my colleague the member from Parkdale—High Park will address in greater detail, may well have points here and there that are useful, but the larger crisis in housing affordability and provision is not being addressed by this government, and until it does address those issues, people in Ontario will suffer and our society will be much less than it should be.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: The member from Toronto—Danforth is very eloquent. He did forget a few things about those 6% rent increases that his party continued to have year after year after year: the fact that there was no plan put in place; that we went from a \$2,000 investment in 2000 from the previous government, who put a moratorium on all housing, to \$60,000 per unit that we are currently putting toward each unit.

You may think that \$2.5 billion is "crumbs." I think that was the quote from the member from Parkdale. The people we have helped in those 200,000 units and 35,000 rent supplements don't call that crumbs. They actually call that a home that's been repaired, a place that they can take some pride in and look after.

1750

There's no question that there is more to do, and we will continue to do so, but the fact remains that when you have such a deficit that you have inherited and you look at the times that we've had—I think it's the greatest recession in 80 years—as Mr. Hugh Lawson, the president of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, has indicated, "Today's announcement represents a bold move forward during these harsh economic times. It will preserve and create more affordable housing, assist low-income people and create jobs. It builds on the momentum created by this government with the housing investments it made in last year's budget." And that was the \$1.2 billion in affordable housing that was referred to as crumbs.

As I indicated, the \$2.5 billion is 200,000 units and 35,000 rent supplements. We also put \$430 million every year into our other programs. So I actually think we're moving forward in a way that, recognizing our difficulties in our times, speaks to the issue, and we're now engaging the people in how we can do a better job on something that we inherited with such a deficit.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I think the member from Toronto—Danforth should be praised and commended for the hard work and genuineness that he puts to this file. We may not agree on much, but I'll tell you, this is a case where I agree that his interest is without question. He did say that Ontario is in a housing crisis, and he's not alone in this. Even the Toronto Star, in the article on December 6—it reads: "A Flurry of Announcements But Little Content." That's basically what he was saying, and I think it's true, because the Star often reflects much of

what the Liberals say. In this case, it must be true because it's reflecting the Liberal policy. It goes on here to say:

"Poverty reduction plans"—I don't think so—"poured out of Queen's Park so fast last week it was hard to keep up with the paper flow." We call it baloney, but anyway.

"But once all the packaging had been stripped away and the self-congratulatory rhetoric sifted out, there wasn't much left. Welfare rates were still below the poverty line. Healthy food was still out of reach. Affordable housing was still a dream."

"The 1.6 million Ontarians living in poverty had to settle for an 18-month study of social assistance, a slight loosening of the rent rules for subsidized housing and an extensive list of the good things Premier Dalton McGuinty had done" or promised to do.

The issue here is, it's all talk. The sad part of it is, they have run out of goals and objectives. This is 18 months. It just gets them past the next election to give you more false promises and platitudes. I am so discouraged. Even I hoped for them at one time, but now even I have lost hope. I think they have lost their way, and I'm so discouraged. They'll have to have public hearings on this bill, I'm sure, during the winter. I'm looking forward to it. This is the most tragic bill I've ever seen. It's—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Comments and questions?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to the member from Toronto—Danforth speaking for 20 minutes about affordable homes in the province of Ontario. Yes, I agree with him: We have a problem there because the Conservative government neglected this area for many, many years. Also, finally, the Conservative Party in Ottawa has also opted out, not supporting the province of Ontario in this regard.

I listened to many people speaking before us in this area. Yes, we have to pay attention to social housing, because it's important for us to fix the poverty issue in Ontario. That's why we've invested more than \$2.5 billion since we were elected in 2003. We've built more than 22,000 units. We've fixed more than 150,000 across the province. We supplement more than 35,000 units too. So we cannot declare victory. That's why we're bringing this bill forward to be debated in the House: to listen to many people, to give us a hand and give us more ideas and to enhance our ability when we move toward the future, because we want to support all the people who cannot afford any units on their own.

On this side of the House—and I hope the member from Toronto—Danforth agrees with us—we care about the people. We care about the poor people. We care about the people who cannot pay full rent. That's why we're bringing this bill forward. We want to hear from everyone in the Legislature, and we also want to open it up to all the people in the province of Ontario, to listen to their input, because their input is valuable and gives us more ideas to put forward our platform for the future. We have to pay a lot of attention to this area. We have a lot of things to fix in this area. We have to work with all the

people in this area in order to create a brighter future, a place for people to live, not homeless on the street, not able to pay the rent.

So I hope all members of this House will support our strategy and put partisan issues aside and come forward together to create a good strategy for the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's great to be able to debate Bill 140 again.

I want to reiterate the comments of my colleague from Durham, who is probably one of the better debaters in this chamber. He has a grasp of the issues—

Mr. Peter Shurman: Masterful.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: He, as my colleague from Thornhill says, is masterful. In fact, he's one of the few MPPs who reads each and every piece legislation front to back. In his estimation today, this bill is one of the most tragic pieces of legislation that he has seen in his, I believe now, 15 years as a member of provincial Parliament, representing the people for Durham.

Interjection: Seems longer.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: As some colleagues say, it seems longer, but I digress.

The sad part, of course, of this piece of legislation is, like the other pieces of legislation in the eve of this government's sitting—we're looking, of course, at the twilight of the mandate; it's getting on. All we hear from members opposite is about something that happened seven years ago, something that happened 10 years ago, something that happened when Bob Rae was Premier or Mike Harris was Premier. They have a real challenge, I just want to say this to my colleague from Toronto—Danforth, actually sticking to the present date. In fact, what I think I'm going to do for some of the members opposite is, when the new year comes upon us, I believe I'm going to send them a calendar to show them that it's actually 2011, not 2003. They've had all of that time—seven and a half years; it'll be soon eight—and my colleague from Toronto—Danforth will know that this government tends to focus on the past and not the present or the future. We'll continue to press them.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Toronto—Danforth has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the members from Etobicoke Centre, Durham, London—Fanshawe and Nepean—Carleton for their comments.

The member from London—Fanshawe said, "We care." I can't tell whether people care or don't care; all I can tell is how they act and whether they address an issue or don't address an issue. If they care, then they didn't address it, and that opens a bunch of questions; if they didn't care and didn't address it, a different set. I don't know whether they care or not; I just know that there's a housing crisis, and the addressing of that crisis by this government falls far short of both what was promised by them in 2003 and what is needed now by the people of this province.

The member from Etobicoke Centre talked about the funds that have been put forward by this government. I

have to say, much like the captain of a ship that goes down with an inadequate number of lifeboats, for those who get in the lifeboats, certainly it's a good thing, but if there are too many people left bobbing in the water, you have a profound problem. We have that. I don't see this government addressing the problem in the way it needs to be addressed.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Wellington–Halton Hills has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given on December 2 by the Minister of Tourism. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr. Ted Arnott: We are here this evening for one simple reason: The Minister of Tourism will not answer our questions on the Niagara Parks Commission. He replies, yes, but his replies are of no relevance to the specific questions we ask. He stands in his place; he speaks; he sticks to his talking points. His message track is his mantra. His soothing words are intended to reassure, but anyone reading Hansard in recent days would have to agree that his replies ignore the substance of the concerns we raise.

1800

One of my responsibilities in this Legislature is my role as official opposition critic to the Minister of Tourism and Culture. It is not my nature to want to criticize the minister personally. It is, however, my job to point out the flaws in the government's policy, speak on behalf of those who are negatively impacted by it, hold the minister to account for his public actions—or, in this case, his lack thereof—and suggest constructive ideas in the public interest.

But let's return to why we're here. The Legislature adjourned at 6 p.m. Debate on the government bill has ended, and yet we are still here waiting for this minister to answer our questions.

In raising these issues and asking for this late show, I mean no personal disrespect to the minister. While I can't say I know him well, he strikes me as a gentleman who would want to serve the people of Ontario with appropriate regard to the standards people would expect of their elected representatives. He's been elected twice to the Legislature by the good people of Markham–Unionville, who chose him ahead of a number of highly qualified candidates. The Premier of Ontario has demonstrated his confidence in the minister by appointing him

to the executive council. But for whatever reason, he is unwilling, unable or unprepared to answer the questions the opposition is raising about the emerging Liberal scandal at the Niagara Parks Commission.

I suspect the minister would like to answer. I suspect that if he had his way, he would be more forthcoming in this House. I suspect that he would want to be truthful in this chamber, but I also suspect that the staff in the Premier's office are standing in the way.

We are now in the eighth year of the McGuinty Liberal government. If an election were held today, the government would be routed from office, and with good reason. There is a growing consensus in Ontario that this government will not change; therefore, there needs to be a change of government.

The problems at the Niagara Parks Commission will not go away under this cabal. After more than seven years in office, the rot has set in, and the rot is theirs. They can't credibly blame this one on their predecessors. As long as they're in office, they will continue to appoint the people they want to appoint to agencies, boards and commissions. It is their right as the governing party. But when they appoint people whose primary qualification is their Liberal Party membership, and when these appointees make mistakes, as they inevitably will, they will appoint more Liberals to clean up Liberal mistakes if given the chance.

Yesterday I was astonished to learn that the minister, having again refused to answer the substance of our questions, used this late show as an excuse. So, having ignored our questions last Thursday, having ignored our questions yesterday, he effectively implied that he would answer them right now. That's the first time I can ever recall a minister refusing to answer questions, of necessity triggering a late show, and then continuing to use the coming late show as an excuse not to answer subsequent questions. It is absolutely absurd, and as the standing orders governing the late show—as the minister should know—do not allow for the kind of exchange that takes place during question period, there is little back and forth. There is no cut and thrust. The rules say that the member asking for the late show gets to speak for five minutes and then the minister or his parliamentary assistant responds for five minutes.

I'm glad the minister is here. He needs to be here. He needs to answer the questions he's avoided thus far.

Our caucus wants to know: Did she try to charge for prep time? Did she pick her own firm with a secret ballot? Did she sole-source the Van Kessel contract? The minister has an obligation to answer, and I'm still waiting for an acceptable answer to the questions I raised this morning. I said that the news media had reported on the expenses of Joel Noden, formerly an executive at the Niagara Parks Commission. I asked, "Did Mr. Noden ever pick up the expenses of any former Ministers of Tourism for meals, hospitality or even a single expense?" And what was the minister's reply? He read from his talking points, and again he tried to implicate our party, even though we've been in opposition for more than seven years.

This House and the people of Ontario expect better and they deserve better. It's time, and I hope that the minister will now answer the questions that have been asked.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The minister has up to five minutes to respond.

Hon. Michael Chan: It's a pleasure for me to rise today in the House to discuss the future of the Niagara Parks Commission. The strength of this commission is a vital part of the future of tourism in Niagara and across Ontario.

We recognize the concerns that have been brought forward recently and in the past. That is why, earlier this year, we took a hard look at the commission. We assessed the situation and determined that we needed to chart a new course. We looked at ways in which we can move the commission forward. We looked at ways in which we can bring greater accountability and transparency. We looked at ways in which we can restore public confidence in this very important government agency.

However, there are forces at work that don't want to see the commission move forward. There are forces at work that don't want change at the commission. There are forces at work that want to keep the status quo that they instilled in 1995, in 1998, and in 2001 when the Leader of the Opposition was tourism minister.

The former general manager of the commission from 1995 to 1998 described its functioning as this: backroom deals, botched projects, distorted construction bids and a severe lack of policies and procedures.

As I stand here, I look across the House to see those forces at work. Those forces are the Conservative Party. That is why recent antics of the party come as no surprise. Recently, the Conservatives launched an attack on the very fabric of change at the Niagara Parks Commission. They launched an attack on the new chair of the commission. They led a misinformation campaign—sensational, to say the least. The Conservatives stood in the House Thursday and again yesterday, presenting inaccurate information in an attempt to damage the integrity and credibility of this exceptional individual.

Let's look at what the Conservatives are saying, and let's compare it with the real facts.

They are making false allegations about the hiring of Grant Thornton. Here are the facts. The commission tenders the appointment of external auditors every five years. A request for proposal was issued in August. Responses came in from eight firms, and one was Grant Thornton LLP. When Grant Thornton was mentioned, the chair declared her previous involvement with the firm. The board ruled that it was not a conflict of interest. There was a process in place whereby the applicants were reviewed and evaluated by the selection committee. The recommendations then went before the board, and it was the board that approved Grant Thornton LLP on September 3, 2010.

They are making false allegations about the compensation of the chair and board members.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would ask you to withdraw the comment about false accusations.

Hon. Michael Chan: Madam Speaker, they are making inaccurate information about the compensation of the chair and board members—and I withdraw that. Thank you.

The fact is this: The chair does not have the authority to increase or decrease the commissioners' pay.

Here is another fact: The chair wants to move board meetings from monthly to bimonthly. This will decrease, not increase, the commissioners' pay.

Why are the Conservatives taking this path? As Chair Fay Booker asked, "Are they afraid of what's going to come out?" Are they afraid that the lack of ability to recollect a letter with concerns is only the beginning of what may come out about the credibility of the Leader of the Opposition?

Beyond these questions lies a moral obligation that must be met tonight. Having these facts now, there needs to be one immediate action that follows. The Conservatives need to apologize for getting the facts wrong on Chair Fay Booker. I am asking the member from Wellington-Halton Hills to apologize to Chair Fay Booker.

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Simcoe-Grey has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given today by the Minister of Tourism. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister may reply for up to five minutes.

1810

Mr. Jim Wilson: The culture of rot has spread from eHealth to the OLG, to the LHINs, to the hospitals in eHealth 2.0 and has now made its way to the Niagara Parks Commission.

This tourism minister has chosen to dodge, deflect and deny any responsibility for the culture of rot at the Niagara Parks Commission, but something he can't deny is that he appointed Liberal-friendly Fay Booker to head up the parks commission. He appointed Fay Booker despite warnings by the Ontario PCs about her long-time Liberal ties. When I questioned the minister on his appointment, he used scripted talking points and repeated over and over again that his appointee was to take the Niagara Parks Commission in a new direction.

But in which new direction are we seeing the commission going? Despite a government-wide wage freeze for non-union employees, the new direction that Ms. Booker decided to take the commission in was to double her own per diem. Despite rules against sole-source contracts, the direction Ms. Booker decided to take the commission in was to hand a \$50,000 sole-source contract to her friend Peter Van Kessel. Despite rules calling for fair and open contracting practices, the direction Ms. Booker took when appointing a new auditor

wasn't to find the least expensive auditor, and it wasn't to find the auditor that understood the NPC file the best; no, the direction she took was to go with the auditing firm she used to be a partner with.

The minister likes to say he has a plan. Is the McGuinty Liberal plan to ignore procurement rules, to hire a friend on a sole-source contract, to renew that same contract without competition and to tear up a bidding process for an external auditor when friends at the chair's old firm were losing the bid on their merits? That plan sounds a lot like the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle.

It says a lot about what Premier McGuinty thinks accountability means when he handed out a parliamentary assistant's job to a member who is embroiled in the Niagara Parks Commission mess. A freedom-of-information request found that from May 2004 to July 2007, the member for Niagara Falls golfed 158 times on the parks commission's tab, and he racked up 506 rounds of golf for himself and his friends.

This is a script we've all seen acted out before. Whether it's Liberal friends and insiders getting rich off a billion-dollar boondoggle at eHealth or whether it's untendered contracts handed out at the unelected and unaccountable LHINs, OLG, Cancer Care Ontario or hospitals, it's nothing we haven't seen before.

It's time for this minister to take responsibility for the mess that continues at the Niagara Parks Commission. He says he has a plan, but it's a plan that Ontario families are not buying anymore. Ontario families want change, and each and every day it becomes more and more obvious that the only real change that will happen will be on election day; that is the day Ontario families tell the McGuinty Liberals that we've seen enough of your schemes and so-called plans, and bring real accountability back to government.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: The heart of the debate tonight is the future of Niagara region's tourism industry. Along the Niagara River from Fort Erie in the south to Niagara-on-the-Lake in the north, we must maximize the full potential of the region. For that, we must take a collective approach to strengthen the commission.

Successive governments have seen the challenges that lie with the commission—challenges that lie with the long-standing corporate culture and practices in the place. This much is very clear: We need more than partisan games and we need more than baseless attacks; we need decisive action.

Our government made a decision to move ahead earlier this year, to chart a new course for the commission. That's where the appointment of a new chair,

experienced in auditing and governance came in; that's where the appointment of a strong vice-chair came in; that's where changes to governance, code of conduct, approval of expenses and public consultation all came in; and that's where changes to the board and senior management came in.

While we continue to move ahead, there are those who oppose change, namely through these methods—a method based on false claims, a method based on false facts, a method—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd remind you about that comment.

Hon. Michael Chan: I withdraw that—a method based on inaccurate claims, a method based on inaccurate facts, a method that is inappropriate and unacceptable.

The members on the other side of the House should hold themselves to a higher standard as elected representatives of their communities. The approach they have put on display is shameful.

There is a long-standing corporate culture at the commission. This culture existed when the Leader of the Opposition was tourism minister. When asked about complaints he received during that time, he simply said, "I do not have a recollection."

There is a saying, and I say it to the Leader of the Opposition and the party opposite: "Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored." Facts were ignored during question period Thursday. Facts were ignored during question period Monday. Truth must prevail.

I ask the members to look at the facts that I have outlined. I ask the members to follow reasoning. I ask the member to move forward with rationale. I ask the members to separate myth from fact, because, in reality, these attacks are just a form of opposition to the change that Chair Fay Booker is spearheading. I leave it to the opposition if they want to oppose change, but I ask that this not be done at the cost of an Ontarian who has devoted much of her career to good governance and accountability.

I ask the members who took an active part in this misinformation campaign to apologize to Chair Fay Booker. I ask the following members to apologize: the Leader of the Opposition on behalf of his party, the member from Thornhill, and the member from Nepean-Carleton. At the very least, the member from Wellington-Halton Hills and the member from Simcoe-Grey, who have posed questions of the same nature tonight, should apologize.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1817.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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No. 81



Nº 81

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 8 December 2010

Mercredi 8 décembre 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



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Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 8 December 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 8 décembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 FAVORISANT DES COLLECTIVITÉS FORTES GRÂCE AU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 7, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2010, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 140, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur les services de logement, abrogeant la Loi de 2000 sur la réforme du logement social et apportant des modifications corrélatives et autres à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me and giving me the opportunity to speak on Bill 140, legislation dealing with Ontario's long-term affordable housing strategy. I'm very happy to speak on this very important initiative of our government.

Let me give you a bit of background as to why this issue is an extremely important one for me and my riding of Ottawa Centre. As you know, I represent a downtown community in the heart of the city of Ottawa. I think—and I've done the math before—I can definitely say that in my riding of Ottawa Centre, within the boundaries of Ottawa, I have the largest number of affordable housing units that are available. Obviously, because of that, I have a great amount of opportunity to work with various affordable housing providers to make sure that we are working on ensuring that there is ample, sustainable, good affordable housing available to members of my community, not only in Ottawa Centre but all across the city of Ottawa.

Just to mention a few of the housing providers that exist and operate within my riding—and that doesn't exclude the others—the big ones that come to mind are,

for example, Ottawa Community Housing, which is probably the largest landlord in the city of Ottawa. Jo-Anne Poirier is the chief executive officer, an extremely capable individual who is doing incredible work with Ottawa Community Housing in making sure that there's good, safe, affordable housing available within the riding of Ottawa Centre. Also, I have CCOC—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Ottawa Centre, just a moment. Minister of Tourism and Culture?

Hon. Michael Chan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I wish to clarify remarks I made on Thursday, December 2. I was referring to the contract the Niagara Parks Commission entered into for external auditors, Grant Thornton, which was competitively tendered in August. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That is a point of order. A member is allowed to correct his own record. It's just a bit unusual to interrupt debate to do it.

The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. I don't mind at all. Thank you, Minister, for taking the opportunity.

I was talking about various service providers that exist in my community of Ottawa Centre and do an excellent job in providing affordable housing. I mentioned Ottawa Community Housing. There is the Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corp., CCOC, led by Ray Sullivan, another great organization which is providing rent-gearied-to-income housing. The Multifaith Housing Initiative, led by Sue Evans, is another very important grassroots organization in my community, led by members of various faith groups who are doing incredible work. Very recently, they held a dinner—I think the first one at the city hall—on National Housing Day, to highlight the importance of affordable housing in our communities and the need to have a national housing strategy in Canada; I will speak to that in a moment.

Another organization I really want to highlight because of the great work it does is Cornerstone. Cornerstone is geared towards providing housing for women, especially women who are escaping domestic violence. They have quite a few housing units in my riding of Ottawa Centre and are an incredible organization. They have a couple of really good projects on the go which I will speak of in a moment.

When I ran in 2007, affordable housing was a big issue in my riding. During the campaign and before, when I was involved with the Centretown Community Health Centre, I learned how important it was to have

clean, safe, sustainable affordable housing in the community. This is people's shelter. This is ensuring that people continue to build their lives in a constructive, positive fashion; and if they don't have safe, clean housing available to them, there are just that many more barriers to having a sustainable, constructive, positive life.

We've had challenges in Ottawa, but I have to say that what I've noticed, definitely since 2007, since I've been very involved as the member for Ottawa Centre, is that we have seen some incredible, positive investments being made in Ottawa Centre. We're talking about investments in terms of both maintaining existing housing stock, as the language goes, existing units that are available, to make sure that they are maintained and updated, and again, that they're clean and safe, and to building new affordable housing units in the community so that we can take people off the waiting list. That has been a big emphasis of my work. I wanted to share some of the accomplishments with you because I think they tie in really well with what this long-term affordable housing strategy is trying to accomplish.

Before I do that, I want to highlight that I've got a huge complement of various forms of affordable housing in my riding. I've got a lot of co-ops, and I want to recognize Karen Sexsmith, somebody who is very instrumental in a very important way in making sure that we allow ownership in our housing mechanism at a sustainable price. We've got affordable housing, rent-gearied-to-income housing and supportive housing, which is also important and which I will speak to in a moment.

As you know, in June 2009 Ontario signed the Canada-Ontario affordable housing agreement and pledged to invest about \$622 million in social and affordable housing, for a total federal-provincial two-year commitment of \$1.2 billion. Under this agreement, Ontario will contribute the following: \$153.9 million for new rental housing for low-income seniors, for, I believe, a total federal-provincial funding of about \$307.8 million; \$28.8 million for new rental housing for disabled persons, a total federal-provincial funding of \$57.7 million; and \$352.2 million for social housing repair and retrofit programs, a total federal-provincial contribution of \$704.4 million.

This program in totality—and that's about \$1.2 billion, both federal and provincial—will build about 4,500 new affordable housing units, and approximately 50,000 social housing units will be repaired, generating about 23,000 jobs. These are quite impressive numbers. I think it's important to remember that that's a huge infusion of capital dollars, not only in building new affordable housing units, but also maintaining and repairing existing ones.

0910

Now, what that means for Ottawa and particularly Ottawa Centre—the work that is going on—is something I'm proud of. We have invested \$6 million for a 55-unit project sponsored by the Shepherds of Good Hope on Merivale Road in my riding of Ottawa Centre. This is a very important project, because these 55 units are geared

toward chronically homeless men. The majority of these men, 52 of them, never had homes, never had a roof over their head, and this is the very first time they can call a place their home. This is where they now live permanently. Here's an interesting thing about these men as well: Besides being chronically homeless, a lot of them had addictions like alcohol and drugs. They have gone through a managed addiction program and are now quite ahead on the road to recovery. By giving them good housing, we're really helping them.

This is a project which, as I mentioned, is part of the Shepherds of Good Hope but is also a part of the inner-city health initiative led by Dr. Jeffrey Turnbull, who I believe is president of the Canadian Medical Association and also chief of staff at the Ottawa Hospital. Dr. Turnbull was speaking at the Salvation Army Hope in the City Breakfast two weeks ago and was talking about this particular project and the kinds of incredible health benefits already coming out of it. The beauty of this project is that it is supportive housing, so what we're seeing is health, social services and housing services provided in one location, an incredible project that I'm very proud of.

There are about six projects in Ottawa that are being sponsored by the city of Ottawa to the tune of about \$720,000. Another very important project is the Beaver Barracks project, led by the Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation, CCOC: \$18.3 million to build 248 new units in Ottawa Centre. I had an opportunity earlier in the spring to visit these projects while under construction—just incredible. I'm really looking forward to this brand new affordable housing: environmentally energy efficient, and great leadership in terms of the kind of new investment we need to make in terms of sustainable, affordable housing units. Another great project taking place; actually the ribbon cutting will be very soon, and I believe people are moving in as we speak.

Also, very important investments of about \$21 million in 2009-10 and \$25 million in 2010-11 for repairs under the social housing repair and retrofit program. And this is the important part: People who live in these affordable housing units want to make sure they continue to live in a clean and safe environment. It's the small things like elevators not working—things that may be small for us—that impact quality of life and really drag that whole community down. We need to make sure that we're investing dollars on those types of initiatives, those types of basic necessities of life, so that people continue to live with dignity. That is extremely important.

I often visit various affordable housing units in my riding, especially in the winter months, and I can see the difference. You go into buildings and they have new carpets, are freshly painted and the elevators are working. People are happy; people are smiling. The other day, I was in Gladstone Heights, on the corner of Gladstone and Preston in my riding. The building has gone through some significant investments. It's a seniors' building. I've been in the building before, and you always hear a dozen or so different complaints about the condition the building is in, and because of that, neighbours are somehow not getting along and there's tension.

This time when I went into that building, seniors were smiling. I got only two complaints while I was knocking on doors. And what were those complaints? The lid on the garbage chute was brand new, so it was too hard for seniors to open. That was the biggest complaint I received. I was very happy to receive that complaint. It was legitimate, and I did check it. It was too hard to open and needed some WD-40 to make it easier. But you could just see the positive impact that the dollars that were invested in that particular community had created, where people were happy and comfortable and involved in their building. You could see the changes that were taking place.

I can go through a list of various retrofit and repair projects going on in my riding right now that are having an incredible impact, from fixing roofs to elevator repairs to foundation repairs to mould remediation, which is extremely important because it impacts people's health. Roof and furnace replacement and changing windows and doors makes a lot of these units built in the 1960s and 1970s energy efficient. These are the kinds of investments we need to make that will create a positive, healthy environment for those who live in those communities and ensure that people continue to live with dignity. I'm very proud that we are seeing those kinds of things in Ottawa Centre.

When the whole affordable housing strategy consultation started, I had the privilege of hosting a community consultation in my riding on August 19, 2009. I have to say that I pretty much hold a community dialogue—a consultation—on a monthly basis in my riding. The one in August of last year was the most involved, engaged and well attended. It was incredible to see the number of people who came with their ideas, and we had a really healthy conversation and discussion as to what Ontario's long-term affordable housing strategy should look like.

I'll be very frank with you: Does the affordable housing strategy that the government has put forward through Bill 140 hit every single mark? No. Is it a great start, for the first time that we've got a positive long-term strategy in the province of Ontario? Absolutely, yes. So it's a work in progress. We will continue to work together.

Here are a few of the things that were part of the consultation—we did put in a report to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, at that time, of some recommendations that came out of Ottawa Centre's consultation, which are part of this affordable housing strategy. For example, in Ottawa Centre's consultation, participants recommended eliminating conflicting policies and regulations, and wanted more centralized organization of services, specifically between the three levels of government, but of course with the province to initiate. We are seeing, in the long-term affordable housing strategy, that the government is taking action to consolidate and harmonize the patchwork of programs that allow municipalities to use funding in a more flexible manner to better meet people's individual housing needs. So, there is a direct correlation as to what was recommended and what is being done here.

Another recommendation was on rent adjustments and calculations, specifically suggesting increasing the asset

exemption and increasing income limits dealing with rent geared to income. Through this long-term affordable housing strategy, the government is simplifying the current RGI calculation process, reducing and eliminating more than 60 criteria now used to calculate income and reducing the administrative burden for tenants, housing providers and service managers, another positive step and recommendation that was made by the consultation that took place in Ottawa Centre.

Another recommendation was made with regard to the government providing better reporting and results data on many important affordable housing indicators. I believe we're seeing, in the long-term housing strategy, that there will be multiple reporting requirements for housing programs with different reporting cycles and frequencies, another positive step.

I would say that there were two areas that were raised in Ottawa Centre's consultation and are not included in this affordable housing strategy. One was the addition of inclusionary zoning. Unfortunately, that is not part of this long-term housing strategy. I understand the debate that surrounds that particular issue. From my point of view, from my community's point of view, I would have preferred to see inclusionary zoning included in the long-term affordable housing strategy.

0920

I understand that the Planning Act—I believe it's section 31 that allows for municipalities to be more flexible in terms of their own zoning and allows for those types of situations. So we will continue to work in our community with the city of Ottawa to find opportunities for some unique ways where we can bring all partners together—developers, affordable housing providers, housing advocates and the community—to maybe come up with those unique projects.

The other is having a sustainable track in terms of capital funding required for a lot of these projects. We are in dire fiscal times; I think we all know that. Government is making a significant contribution. I talked about a \$1.2-billion federal-provincial contribution in the last two years, which is making very significant, positive impact on the community. But having a long-term affordable housing strategy is a first step. By getting the mechanisms, the regulations right, as the financial situation of the province improves, we can talk about the capital needs as well. But I think what is very much needed—and I see I've got very little time—is that we need the federal government at the table as well. We need a national housing strategy. No government, municipal or provincial, can just work alone and deal with such a significant challenge like affordable housing.

I think Ontario has taken the right step in terms of having a long-term housing strategy. It is time that the federal government also comes to the table so that the kind of positive changes I was talking about that are being made in Ottawa Centre, in my community, can also be made across the province and across the country.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for Nepean-Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Just briefly, this is the first time you've been in the chair since you announced that next year you're going to go on to bigger and better things with your family, and I wanted to extend my best. I've always enjoyed you in the House in your capacity as Chair, but also as we spar sometimes across the way. I wish you much happiness in 2011 as it approaches.

I want to also thank my colleague from Ottawa Centre, who rose in defence of his community.

Having said that, the official opposition does have some concerns with this piece of legislation. As I spoke to this bill yesterday, my colleague from Burlington, who is our critic for municipal affairs and housing and who has an extensive background in municipal affairs, has raised some concerns, specifically—and I put this to the member—that the government, regardless of the rhetoric in here, has failed from time to time—most of the time—to meet their commitment to develop a 10-year affordable housing plan. Instead, with this legislation they have placed this cumbersome and potentially costly task on the local service managers so that once again they are able to step back in the event of failure and blame somebody else.

Let's talk about that for one moment, because that is one of the big concerns the official opposition, the Ontario PC caucus, has, is this blame game, whether it's from time to time blaming Stephen Harper or blaming Mike Harris or Ernie Eves. This week, we actually heard them blame municipalities for something. The reality is that at some point in time after seven and a half years you have to take responsibility for your own actions.

That is, I think, the most critical criticism that the official opposition has with this legislation. If you're going to put forward a substantive piece of legislation, make sure that you get it right. Make sure it's available to the opposition members in time, which this bill wasn't. And ensure as well that your stakeholders are part of the planning process.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I no doubt want to underline that the member who presented tries as much as he can in order to do what he can for his constituents, as we all do in this assembly, when it comes to not-for-profit housing or what it might be.

The issue to me, however, is, where are we at when it comes to not-for-profit housing in the province of Ontario today compared to what it was eight years ago or what it was even 20 years ago? Ontario is no longer in the not-for-profit housing business in the way that it used to be. We had a very proud history in the province dating back into the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, where massive investments were made in order to build not-for-profit housing projects across this province. Why? Because the private sector, as far as the market itself, did not provide the units necessary in order for many families to find a home.

In my own community—I'm sure it's the same in other communities—I have people who are calling my

constituency office on a regular basis, saying that they're not able to find a place to live. I have a family that we've been dealing with in a constituency office, as a matter of fact, just this last week. They have been given notice to vacate their apartment because the owner of the building wants to move into the building himself or a family member wants to move in, which is that owner's right. But there's nowhere for this family to go. A family of eight, including the parents, have nowhere to go when it comes to finding an apartment in the city of Timmins.

Clearly, there is something that needs to be done when it comes to not-for-profit housing. We're proud that we have a very strong not-for-profit housing stock in the city of Timmins, Kapuskasing, Hearst and other places, but we have not built on that stock for at least the past 15 years and I think it's high time we do. I don't see this bill achieving that in the end.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to rise and reply to the member from Nepean—Carleton. Certainly, when she speaks of a reality check, it's true. There is a reality check here. The reality is, whether we like to accept it or not, the previous government put a moratorium on housing in this province and 17,000 units were cancelled and virtually very little was built.

There's no question that there is a need that needs to happen across this province. Currently, our investment of \$2.5 billion has resulted in 22,000 new homes and well over 150,000 repairs. That is a \$2.5-billion investment. We've actually prevented more than 23,000 evictions to date through our rent control, so we have in fact put in place the beginning of where we need to go.

Ultimately, everybody has agreed in this House there is more that needs to be done, but we build on the foundation that we were given and the fact is that we were given a very shaky foundation, so we do what we can with the resources that we have. We put \$430 million a year into our programs. It's incumbent upon us as a government to ensure that those dollars are spent in the most cost-effective way possible, that they are providing the services for the folks who need them. It's also incumbent upon us as a government to ensure those dollars are well spent.

Part of this housing strategy is to look at those 20 programs right across this province to see if we're getting value for our money. Are we in fact providing the kinds of services—the service managers themselves have asked for this flexibility. Remember, during the 13 consultations across this province, it was the service managers who said, "We need more flexibility to do what we need to be able to do locally."

This is the beginning of a long-term strategy that we've put forward in this bill. I look forward to the consultations as we move forward, but there is no question that we're going in the right direction.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to comment on the member from Ottawa Centre. He comments frequently and al-

ways relates it directly to his riding. I think often he'd be better to perhaps look a little more objectively at what's actually going on across the province, because you are the government.

I was listening to our member from Burlington yesterday, who I thought gave a very thorough review of where we've been and where we are, not just on this, as she's our critic, but even this morning we had our member from Nepean–Carleton speak very effectively about how poorly the programs are working on many fronts, not just on the housing file but I would say certainly on the energy file, the jobs file and the tax file. You'd have to just ask a few questions and find out that there's a bit of trouble in the economy right now, which affects families—in fact, these very families we're talking about.

The rose-coloured-glasses statement that we heard from the member from Ottawa Centre needs to be reviewed. In fact, I'm going to take it on myself in the next round to speak on this topic and perhaps have a little more balance to my comments. I would hope at this time of year to just hold the government accountable without being personally critical. The people who are the most affected, whether it's on the housing or the jobs side or just the quality of life side, are always the most vulnerable. Our critic said yesterday, clearly, that shelter is probably the most important part of resolving the problems of poverty—to have a place that you call home. From there, you can build a life for yourself and your family. That's kind of missing today. I'm finding out that there's no support for the programs.

0930

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Ottawa Centre, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My gratitude to the members from Nepean–Carleton, Timmins–James Bay, Etobicoke Centre and Durham for their feedback.

Let me make just one point very clear: I am paid to represent the good people of Ottawa Centre. So as long as I'm here elected, I will continue to talk about all the good things that are happening in Ottawa Centre and the kinds of initiatives and efforts I'm working on to make sure that the good people in Ottawa Centre have the quality of life they so very much enjoy. That is why I'm very proud. More needs to be done; no doubt about it. But I'm very proud that since 2007, we have seen significant investment in both new affordable housing being built in Ottawa Centre—almost 400 new units as we speak—and also many, many units that are being repaired so that people can live quality, healthy lives. That is my mandate, that is why I'm here and I'm never going to shy away from that.

I'll give you another example of an incredible project that is going on. Forty-two supportive housing units are being built for women through Cornerstone, an incredible organization in my riding. Of these 42 supportive units, about 22 are for senior women—a demographic in the population we need to really look after—and another 20 units are for chronically homeless women, again making

sure that they for the first time have a roof over their heads.

Some \$6.3 million is being invested, 50-50 from the federal and provincial governments, and the amazing thing, again, is this is really, truly supportive housing. We are providing health services, social services and housing services under one roof. The incredible amount of savings that we're going to gain from all other areas by bringing these services together under one roof is tremendous. I'm really proud that that is taking place in my community of Ottawa Centre, and I'm grateful to the government for making that investment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: This morning I'm pleased to participate in Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2010, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts.

I looked and listened yesterday to all sides of the House speak and, in reviewing Hansard, I have a pretty thorough understanding of the various positions. Our critic from Burlington, Ms. Savoline, having served as a mayor and a regional chair, is very familiar with that level, and as our critic brings a lot of insight to the file. I reviewed her remarks yesterday and would encourage people who may be interested to look up Hansard online and get a clearer definition of our position on this important file. I also listened to the NDP critic, Mr. Tabuns, and found his remarks to be very compassionate. I would say that they're important; I'll put it that way.

The background on this whole thing is really more important than the bill itself. When you look at the state of the economy today as sort of a starting point, the most vulnerable are the most and the first affected. I think that you can look further back. There was a commitment by the government in the last election called the poverty reduction task force. It sounds very good and quite genuine. I don't think it's unique to the Liberal Party any more than any party that we try to have a strong economy that appropriates balance and opportunity, but not leaving people behind. I would put that on the record; it would be my position to stick to that general and broad theme of creating a strong economy so that we have a great quality of life. Without the strong quality of life—you look at some countries around the world today and look at their economy and the poor quality of life. They're kind of related.

You ask yourself, what's the genesis of good quality of life? Is it the economy, or do we just move to places around the world where it already exists? Well, in fact, around the world it's falling apart, because the economy is driving a lot of it. I don't blame any one government, but you have to respond to the infection that's in the economy at the time, whether it's in Ireland or Portugal or any other part of the world, without putting a disparaging comment on—I think it started in Greece and has percolated down, and I don't think it's finished. In fact, that same result is happening here.

When you go back to the laudable objective in 2007 of having a poverty reduction task force, which has reported to the minister, Ms. Broten, who received the report, one of the pillars of this recovery of building strength in the vulnerable community is shelter. I would say and put to you that shelter is probably first. How can you put down a resumé or a job application if you don't have a home? If your home is a shelter somewhere, it's pretty difficult and pretty desperate. Your life is probably in a lot of stress at that point, whether it's your family, your children, your partner, your friends. Your whole confidence is shaken—it's destroyed, many times—and mental health manifests itself, so that when you go to talk to people about your life, your future, your job, you haven't really got much confidence at the table.

That's an important goal. I don't know where the report is, but I would say that the "poverty reduction task force" is just an expression. If you look at the numbers—and I thought Ms. Savoline yesterday—I'm just going to quote her numbers in Hansard so that it's consistent. The numbers are quite striking. In fact, we often hear a quarrelling about what the numbers are in terms of jobs and job creation. I think it's important to put on the record that Ontario's population has grown since 2005 by 500,000 people. That means the province's economy must add at least 100,000 jobs per year just to keep up. If you look at China, I think they have to create a million jobs a week to keep up with population growth. There's a billion and a half people there; just do the math.

This is a serious economic problem, and I don't know what the jobs are. If you look at the report just recently on the Second Career, in which they invested a considerable amount of money—some \$36 million, I believe—how many actually got jobs? Yes, they trained. I read of one report last week where the person had a degree, had worked 12 years in the auto industry, lost the job through restructuring etc. and eventually went back, spent \$26,000 on tuition and other costs, and did get some relief, I think, but now has got more debt and no job. The job he's being offered is about one third of the income.

So when you look at statistics, what's the household average income? It's actually going down. What's housing? It's actually going up or stabilizing. So affordable housing itself is an oxymoron. Then you look at what the other solutions are for this permanent shelter threshold that I talk about, and it's rent.

What some of the real structural problems—there are vacancies. There are 22,000 vacancies, as our critic has alluded to, and at 22,000 vacancies one must ask themselves, what's with the landlords? First of all, there are a couple of reasons there. One of them would be the Landlord and Tenant Act. In fact, there's a really good article this morning in the paper on it. I would encourage people to have a look at this article this morning. The article talks about the Landlord and Tenant Act and how unbalanced it is. I thought I had it marked here. In it, it's really saying how the landlords are portrayed as rich, greedy persons, which I don't think—I know where I rent my office for the constituency, the landlord is a large

landowner in the area of Durham—and finds out that he is not that; he's very generous and quite compassionate. I will find that section here a little later.

I'm just going to say, though, really the same thing is the other report that has recently been filed with the new minister, Mr. Bartolucci, who has done a respectable job there, I would say. This was dropped on him when he was moved out of his previous ministry position. I would say that the difficulty here is—Building Foundations: Building Futures. Again, sort of like the poverty reduction task force, a great title—and actually not a bad booklet; congratulations—Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy. But if you read through here, and if you look at the bill itself, there's no money.

0940

I'm going to relate it to the global thing again. IT wasn't all caused by Premier McGuinty, but he's got to stop spending money. Let's be honest about it: You can't spend your way out of poverty.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Exactly. Some of the members are saying you can't have it both ways. The reality is that you're sending signals out there—and that report I referred to precipitated itself into Bill 140. If you look at the bill and, again, refer to the work that's done, I'm going to put a context around all of these, poverty and the housing issue. I'm looking at an article that was in the Toronto Star yesterday. The Toronto Star is not my particular first choice to read in the morning, but nonetheless we do pay close attention to it. It's widely read and often has good cartoons.

Here's the Torstar article by Carol Goar from December 6. It says, "A Flurry of Announcements but Little Content." There's pretty well another way of saying that the cover on the booklet looks good, the titles of the policy themes sound good, but when you take off the cover, it's an empty box. It's like a child pulling the stocking out at Christmas and finding a lump of coal.

Here's what it says:

"Poverty reduction plans poured out of Queen's Park so fast last week it was hard to keep up with the paper flow.

"But once all the packaging had been stripped away and the self-congratulatory rhetoric sifted out, there wasn't much left. Welfare rates were still below the poverty line. Healthy food was still out of reach. Affordable housing was still a dream.

"The 1.6 million Ontarians living in poverty had to settle"—this is important—"for an 18-month study of social assistance, a slight loosening of the rent rules for subsidized housing and an extensive list of the good things Premier Dalton McGuinty had done for them."

Ask yourself—yes, they're spending lots of money—how's it working? How's it going? We've almost doubled the debt. Our budget is about \$106 billion or \$107 billion; of that, the deficit is about \$20 billion. That's the on-book debt part, not including the WSIB debt. That's about 20 cents on every dollar that we're borrowing. We're borrowing it from the future. We're

borrowing it from our children, who are graduating and can't find jobs. We're borrowing it. Wake up.

I've been here 15 years, in fact, and before that in Durham, when I was chair of finance. I sat on the very same committees and I met Floyd Laughren, a nice person, and I met Bob Rae, now a Liberal. Before the social contract, the plan then was the expenditure reduction plan—that's what they called it. They wanted all the municipalities to make cuts when some of members here were on council back then; I'm sure Ms. Savoline was. They wanted the municipalities to take the heat.

Then they couldn't get the unions or anyone to agree with them, so Floyd Laughren and Bob Rae designed a plan which was called the social contract. What it did was open up every single public sector payroll contract and take out about eight or 10 days' pay. The budget then was \$48 billion and the deficit was \$12 billion; that's 25 cents on every dollar you're spending. Plus, the budget today isn't \$48 billion—that was back in 1995—today the budget is over \$100 billion, so it's doubled.

Ask yourself, is it any better? Can you get into a bed in a hospital quicker? Do they release you from the hospital with any supports in the community? Is there any more long-term care? Is hydro cheaper? Is anything cheaper? No. They've increased taxes to the point where there's not a cent left in your pocket. Seniors can barely stay in their homes and you're talking about affordable housing. Start with making it affordable by keeping your hands out of their pockets.

I deal with constituents in my riding, as I'm sure all members do, and I don't flaunt the politics at them. I say, "What's the worst problem that you see?" "I can't pay my hydro bill." These are people who built the country and don't normally complain and they're finding that the municipal taxes—all part of this equation is the cost of providing services, and the wage infrastructure of that is incredible.

If fact, if you look—I just looked at the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act recently because there were things going on in my riding in the energy sector that I wanted to know more about. The salary of the person who was sending out the bill on the rate increase and explanation—there was like an accounting manager. I was a manager at General Motors for 31 years, and a personnel manager, I might say, as well.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, I had quite an interesting job.

Here is the issue: That person's salary was \$348,000. Now, who are they in competition with? It's a monopoly. And it's rampant throughout the entire range of services under the current government's regime. Even their commitment in their budget spending—I'm going to put it in perspective here because it is related to this. Affordability should be led from the top, and quite honestly, I'm stressed and disappointed at the lack of ability to stop the spending.

In the last couple of days, we were dealing with a person with the Niagara Parks Commission spending

\$300,000 or \$400,000 on somebody who is running a park. I don't know. Where's the value? It should be done by volunteers, technically.

The province is in a serious problem, and until you admit you have a problem, you can't begin to deal with the problem. I don't want to blame the people in those sectors who are making \$100,000-plus. It was in the report in the paper there a few weeks ago. I'm critic of government services, and in that, there is a deputy minister who makes over \$350,000, and there are four assistant deputies all making over a quarter of a million dollars.

What does government services do? It's a large ministry that deals with contracts and deals with consultants. We're spending about \$1 million a day on consultants. We have 70,000-some public sector employees who are qualified people. Why have we got all these consultants? I think that's off-book payroll; that's what it is.

I look at some of the people who have been appointed. For instance, the head of the Ontario Power Authority is a good example or the IESO and all these electricity safety places; OPG, Ontario Power Generation; Hydro One; the OPA; the Ontario Energy Board—these are people making \$500,000 and up.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes. So why is there no money in this bill for housing? I'm explaining it to the Minister of the Environment. You look after Earth Works up in Uxbridge, in my riding, and I'll be happy.

My point is that I have deeper concerns that you have a plan that has no money, which means you have no plan. Let's be straightforward with the people of Ontario. I'm going to say to myself that there are many members over there who I don't think intentionally set out to make things worse; I think we all try to make things better. I wouldn't blame any one individual or minister, but you have to deal with what's going on.

There's a good example just in the clippings this morning. This is how your sector is dealing with it: "Hydro Error Costs Retiree \$12,000." This is a retired teacher who has a property, which was his old family farm, I gather, and after the end of the year, he got a hydro bill where he was in arrears for \$12,000, and they just took it out of his account and he didn't have any money left. Now he's fighting to get the money back. That's a government agency. Don't blame it on somebody else.

There's a number here. It says, "Academic Rankings: How Canada is Becoming Outclassed."

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: That's what the article says. I'm not making it up. Read it.

"Stacking the Deck Against Ontario Landlords" is the article in the National Post. Here is the issue that I'm talking about. If you look at the Landlord and Tenant Act and you read this article—and you wonder why landlords would sooner take their apartment building and turn it into a condo where you have the money.

How do people even get into their first house or home, which might be a condo? That's what is happening in Toronto, and landlords are saying that under this act—it

says here, “The law appears to have been drafted on the assumption that all landlords are rich and greedy. Under the act, a tenant can allow anyone to move” in to be a tenant.

After they get it, they can move in, they can bring friends in and you can’t get them out. In fact, if the person who is the tenant brings up a record of maintenance deficiency, the landlord may have to award money to the tenant, even if they haven’t been advised.

The landlord must play the nice-and-careful role in case they might offend someone and be accused of harassment. Even by asking repeatedly for the rent, they can be accused of harassment. Bringing up random maintenance deficiencies—“the Landlord and Tenant Board, which appears to” have been “set up specifically to help tenants exploit their landlords,” for example. I’m reading the article here, and we’re talking about affordable housing.

0950

Just watch what’s going around in the community and in the province and pay attention. And you wonder why housing in Ontario—the term “affordable housing” is an oxymoron. There’s no such thing. I think the average price of a home in Toronto is \$330,000, and unless you’re making \$45,000 a year, there’s no possible way. Then you look at the length of mortgages and people carrying 50% of their income as a mortgage. Those are signs that the current system isn’t working, and we’re leaving more and more people behind. Do not put out these artificial papers that imply that you’ve got a plan and do the very opposite. They mislead people, in my opinion.

I’m concerned that if you look at—there are 142,000 people on the current waiting lists. That’s unacceptable, if you look at how much other jurisdictions and other provinces are putting into it.

On the report, I’m going to say one last thing: There is federal money at the moment. Right now, it’s about \$900 million this year, last year and next year that goes into housing from the federal government. Yes, they are getting out of it.

Our plan is to have—not investing in capital; it’s investing in people. The rent subsidy provision in Bill 140 is something I’d accept. The rent-gearied-to-income provision I accept. That is how you help people with the dignity of saying that they pay a fair share; that may be a very small amount, but at least they have the dignity of saying that they are paying, that it isn’t another handout that makes them feel even smaller and less confident in themselves and their family.

This bill is just one more thing. It’s disappointing. It’s too little, it’s too late and it’s completely—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Timmins–James Bay for questions and comments.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I always enjoy listening to my good friend from—

Mrs. Julia Munro: Durham.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Durham. Thank you. I always have to point to get the riding names. That’s why I will

never run as a Speaker; otherwise I’d have to say, “Hey you, your turn.”

Anyway, I always enjoy listening to what he has to say and, quite frankly, I agree with him in the sense that this is sort of a late initiative at the end of a dying government’s term. They’ve now been the government of Ontario for seven-plus years.

They first ran, if you remember back early on, in the election that led to their first term, on building 13,000 housing units within—no, there were 20,000 housing units that were going to be built within the first three years. Here we are, seven years later. Around 10,000 units have now been built over a period of seven years, hardly anywhere near what they had called for in their own platform and certainly not anywhere near what the housing community is asking for, which is about 10,000 new units per year.

I understand there is a want on the part of this government to measure what the expectations are as far as the 10,000 units per year, but at least they should be able to meet their own targets that they had set when they ran back in the early election that led to their first mandate.

I look at this bill and I say, “What is this going to do? Is this going to do anything to rectify the deep housing shortage that exists in the province of Ontario when it comes to the not-for-profit sector?” I have to say no, because what we’re really dealing with is a bill that’s going to deal with some of the bureaucratic issues and about how not-for-profit housing is run, but it doesn’t deal with providing any funding, and it doesn’t deal with providing any initiatives, targets, goals or anything that deals with the issue of not for profit.

I’ll get a chance to talk about that a little bit later, but I wanted to agree with the premise the member had made.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I listened to the member from Durham, and he promised us, before he spoke, that he was going to be balanced in the spirit of the season. But he wasn’t. He started talking about different things, and he talked about the economy in Europe, in the United States. Do you know what? We are lucky we live in Ontario. We have a government that was able to produce more than 50,000 jobs for the people of Ontario. Also, the recovery was more than 87% of job losses in the province of Ontario. I think it’s a very important step, and I think the member from Durham should stand up in his place and praise the government and thank the government and thank our strategy—

Mr. Phil McNeely: It’s 10% in the States.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yes, 10% in the States and 87% in Ontario. It’s a very important step.

We believe strongly in the people of Ontario. I think it’s our responsibility and duty to support the low-income people and the poor people among us in the province of Ontario by putting a strategy for affordable homes. I think that my colleague the member from Ottawa Centre outlined the government’s vision and how much we invested and how much we’re about to engage in the

people of Ontario in our strategy, our vision, for affordable homes in the future.

He was talking about many different elements. He was talking about the mortgages. I was listening the other day to the Bank of Canada. Do you know what Mr. Flaherty said? Ontarians comfortably are able to pay more than \$300 per month for a mortgage, which is good. Our mortgage is protected. If you don't believe me, go back to the record, go back to Mr. Flaherty's announcement.

I think it's important to talk about those elements because in Ontario, in Canada, we are comfortably trying to recover from our downturn of the economy, unlike what happened in Europe and what happened in the United States, because we have a plan, we have a strategy. We believe in the people. We invest in the people of Ontario.

So, the member will hopefully join us and support the affordable homes not to be empty affordable homes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I guess this is where I say, now back to the regularly scheduled debate of a current issue. If you listen to my colleague across the way, you will hear one side of the story. It's a very rosy, glossy fairy tale. But the reality is, as my colleague from Durham has pointed out, things in Ontario aren't that great.

For example, and I'd like to say this to my colleague, we have the highest unemployment in Canada. We're a have-not province for the first time since Confederation, thanks to them. They have doubled the debt. They have doubled the deficit. Ontarians aren't working, and they have a high debt load.

The reality is, an affordable housing plan should make housing affordable for Ontarians. This legislation does not do that. Do you want to know why? Because it has been the economic and the fiscal policies of that government, who have time and again spent our children's mortgages and mortgaged their futures. If you ask me to talk to the folks back home in Ottawa, particularly in Nepean–Carleton, they're going to tell me that housing right now is not affordable because their hydro bills have doubled. They're going to tell me that their savings have been depleted to pay for so many of their risky schemes, whether that is in energy or elsewhere.

Last week I had a round table with seniors, with John Yakabuski, the MPP for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Each of the seniors who sat there and told us their stories were concerned about housing, either staying in their own home or wondering what is next as they move through their retirement. They're concerned about their families. This bill is not going to save that. In fact it's their budget, hopefully, next year, that's going to start putting things in place so that Ontarians are working again and that they're paying for their bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Durham for his comments. He is often on his feet representing the interests of his party. As an old friend of mine used to say, they're beating him like a rented mule over

there. He's carrying more than his fair share of the mail over there, once again standing up representing his party. I want to thank him for that.

A few facts: Since 2003, \$2.5 billion was invested in this sector, helping us to build 22,000 new units, repair over 150,000 existing units and provide rent supplements to 35,000 different families.

There is something I'm not sure that's been put on the record that I find very interesting when it comes to this particular issue. Under our government, since we've been in power since 2003, the average rental increase under the Liberals is 2.05%. Under the Tories, not bad: 2.9%—almost 3%—in their seven or eight years in power. Guess what? Under the NDP, those who like to proclaim that they're the protectors of the most vulnerable people in the province, the average rental increase in their five years was almost 5%: 4.82% per year.

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Out of his 20 minutes my friend from Durham spent a fair bit of time talking about energy. I'm not sure how he migrated over to that topic, but since he did, I'm sure you'll allow me to respond. I need to remind people that when the Conservatives were in power in 1999, the debt retirement charge, for the first time in the history of the province of Ontario, came into being. It was put on your energy bill. What happened when they put the debt retirement charge on in 1999? Up until 2003, they collected anywhere from \$1 billion, \$2 billion to \$4 billion; I'm not sure how much. For the first time under them, \$1 billion, \$2 billion to \$4 billion was collected, but the debt retirement charge went from \$19.4 billion up to over \$20 billion. It increased by \$1 billion when they brought \$2 billion to \$4 billion in. I don't know where the money went.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I appreciate that opportunity. I just want to put a response on the record to the members from Timmins–James Bay, London–Fanshawe, Nepean–Carleton and Thunder Bay–Atikokan. I thank them for listening.

On the job front, I'm just going to report here, let's not forget that this government had its hand in getting Ontario to where it is today, whether that's good or bad; take your own medicine. The unemployment rate presently stands at 8.6%, higher than the national average of all of Canada, which is 7.9%. How are you doing? It's higher than Korea; it's higher than Mexico; it's higher than Brazil. Let's look at other provinces. Don't blame Ontario's situation on the global downturn. If you're looking at other jurisdictions, Ontario's unemployment rate has surpassed Canada's national average every single month since January 2007—almost two full years before we saw a financial crisis. Your policies are simply wrong. It's unfortunate, but they're wrong. I'm going back to first principles. You have to have a strong economy to make sure that we have a quality of life, whether it's education, health care or social housing, as we're talking about today. When I say "wrong," it's the wrong signal.

The last one, the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, was kind.

Adam Beck in 1906—the founder of electricity for Ontario, or hydro anyway—his policy was “power at cost.” He drove an economy in Ontario based on safe, reliable, affordable power. What is missing today? I believe our power system is safe; I believe it’s quite reliable; but it’s not affordable. Sixty per cent of all of the energy used is used by industry. The residential side is a very small part of the consumption ball, but it is non-discretionary consumption and it affects the poorest of the poor, and this is part of your plan that doesn’t work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I’m glad to rise in this particular debate because it’s not often that we get to speak on the issue of not-for-profit housing here in the assembly. We haven’t seen a bill touching on that subject for some time. It gives us a chance to all weigh in and talk about what we think is good and what we think is bad and what needs to change within the not-for-profit sector.

I have to say I was elected here in 1990, and when I came to this assembly the province of Ontario at that time, under previous governments and under the NDP government of the day that I came in with, was very active in the not-for-profit housing scene. Across this province, co-op housing units, municipal not-for-profit housing units and others were being built across the province at a fairly good rate. In communities everywhere from Cornwall to Sarnia to Timmins to Moosonee, and even on some of our native reserves, we saw not-for-profit housing being built. Why? Because governments of the day, dating back to the 1970s, understood that there is a housing crisis in the province of Ontario and that not everybody in this province can afford to buy a house. Therefore, if you’re in the rental market, there are limited options available to people when it comes to the ability, first of all, to find suitable rental accommodation, and number two, to be able to pay for it, as far as, how much is that unit going to cost you?

Governments of the day were very active on the housing file. You had on the one side governments dating back to the time of Bill Davis and up to the time of Bob Rae that were very active in making sure that we built not-for-profit housing in this province, and on the other side those governments from the time of Mr. Davis to the time of Mr. Rae were very active on rent control legislation and making sure that we were able to have rent control of some form that allowed the rents not to go through the roof so that people could afford to find a rental unit and pay for it. Otherwise, because you’re in such a tight market when it comes to the availability of rental units, the rents were going through the roof, as they would say.

So governments, starting back in the time of the Conservatives, pushed then by the NDP and by the Liberals in opposition, and eventually even ourselves as the government from 1990 to 1995—there’s much that was done to deal with rent controls so that the private sector

housing that was out there was available and was made affordable to people across this province.

Now, did everybody like that? No. I have landlords in my riding who came to see me from the time I was elected until the time we scrapped rent control under the Conservative government—one moment. Sorry about that. I have a lingering cold that I think just about everybody in this assembly has caught, and if they haven’t caught it, they’re about to get it; it’s been going around, as I see, the benches.

As I said, I’ve had people in my riding who are landlords who didn’t like rent control and saw that as a barrier to their ability to pay the bills, to maintain their own housing stock and make the kind of profit they thought was fair with the investment they were making in their housing stock. Nonetheless, government said, “Listen. We need to balance the need of a person to be able to make money with the need of a person to be able to afford to pay the rent in the first place.” So it was with much chagrin that, back in the Tory days under Mike Harris, I saw rent control scrapped in this province. We’ve moved now to what we call vacancy decontrol. So now, if I’m in an apartment building, as long as I stay in that apartment, my landlord can’t raise my rent more than a certain percentage every year. But the moment that I leave the apartment and vacate it, the landlord then can reset the rent.

Say that he used to charge for a downtown Toronto apartment, one unit—I’m probably paying about \$1,500 a month, which is quite cheap in downtown Toronto. As I looked at new members being elected to the Parliament three years ago, as they came down here to rent units, they’re paying upwards of \$2,000 a month for a rental unit here in downtown Toronto. It goes to show you what’s happened with vacancy decontrol. We’ve gone from paying \$1,400 or \$1,500 a month for a one-bedroom apartment to—and the minute the person moves out the landlord is able to demand a higher price—as much as \$2,000 or \$2,100 a month for that same unit.

Clearly, there are a lot of people out there who can’t afford to pay that kind of money for a housing unit. Imagine being a young couple with a couple of children needing a three-bedroom apartment and how much that costs in the downtown core. I can tell you, if a one-bedroom unit on the corner of Bay and Wellesley Streets is going from \$1,900 to \$2,100 a month, imagine what you’re paying for a three-bedroom unit in that building or any building in and around the downtown of the city of Toronto.

If you move outside of the downtown core, if you move north of Eglinton or even farther north, to a place called Timmins or Moosonee, rents there can be pretty darned expensive too. You’re looking at rents for a one-bedroom apartment in a community like Timmins—a decent one—of about \$700 to \$800 a month. That is certainly not what you’re paying downtown in Toronto, but still, it’s a fair amount of money for people to pay.

So the question becomes, what has this government done in the seven years they’ve been here on a promise to

deal in a progressive way with housing policy in this province? What have they done to address any of the issues on the private side, as far as rent control, and what have they done in order to deal with for not-for-profit housing? I would say very little. We are still under the Mike Harris rent control legislation; that has not been changed significantly. There have been smatterings—some dabblings, as they would say—of attempts to make it look as if something was done but we essentially do not have rent control in this province other than what we call vacancy decontrol.

1010

That is causing a real hardship for people because rents are getting much more expensive with the tighter market. Unfortunately, it needs to be said that prices of rental units are going up to the point that a lot of people can't afford to pay the kind of rents that are being asked, because there's such a shortage of stock when it comes to rental units across this province.

Now, there are some places in the province, I'm sure, where rents are reasonable because there is a large vacancy component, but in many places across Ontario that is not the case. I can tell you in the city of Timmins, certainly, rentals are hard to come by, especially quality rentals, and if you do find one, you will pay quite the dollars. Many people can't afford to pay the kinds of rents that are being asked for.

That brings us to the not-for-profit side. The reason the province of Ontario got into the not-for-profit business was very simple: It was to allow those people on pensions, such as seniors; people with disabilities; people who are on ODSP; or people with a lower income who are working minimum-wage jobs to be able to afford to find a one-, two- or three-bedroom apartment and pay rent geared to income. A percentage of the income would be calculated as the rent, and then the rest of it would be paid by the rents collected overall in the unit as well as the subsidy that you got when you initially built the building.

Typically it's about 30% of your income, in a not-for-profit unit, that goes to rent. If you're making \$1,000 a month, 30% would be \$300 a month that you would pay. It might be 35%, but the last time I looked it was 30%, so I may be a little bit off on the number, but the idea is that it's rent geared to income. That says the price of your rental is based on a percentage of your income. We built these not-for-profit housing units in order to be able to do that.

Some would argue, and certainly the Conservative government argued this when they came to power in 1995, that they shouldn't be in the housing business and that it was costing Ontario a lot of money. Really, it wasn't costing us any money. Yes, at the beginning of the construction we were providing dollars to assist with engineering, the development of the project and the actual construction. We would secure the mortgages, and in some cases we would put in some money upfront, but the unit itself was paid for over time, because eventually the mortgage gets paid down; the rents that are collected

on the rent-geared-to-income unit are enough in order to maintain the stock.

If you look at a lot of the housing stock in this province, and certainly, it's the case in my riding, I would venture to guess that there are probably not too many units in my constituency that still have a mortgage on them. Pins Gris and Kaleidoscope and other various not-for-profit or co-op housing units that were built in my riding were built in the early 1990s. That would mean that they've been around for at least 15 years. The mortgages on these things were probably around 20 to 25 years max, so most of them have their mortgages completely paid off or they're very close to being paid off.

This means to say the dollars to maintain these particular units, by and large, come from the rents that are being paid by the tenants. It's a not-for-profit housing model, so the money that is paid by the individual that comes into the co-op or the not-for-profit housing agency goes towards maintaining that building. Do we need to change an elevator? Do we need to change windows? Do we need to re-insulate? Do we need to fix the roof? That's where that money comes from.

Those not-for-profit housing agencies and co-ops have done quite well at managing that money so that, over the longer term, those units actually don't cost the province anything. So yes, there's an initial investment up front, but what we end up doing is dealing with a housing shortage in the province of Ontario by front-loading our costs as a province, and eventually the units themselves help to pay the overall cost of maintaining those buildings. A lot of our buildings now have been in the system for quite a long time.

If you look at Regent Park, which is one of the older and probably one of the most well-known housing projects—Moss Park and Regent Park have been around for the better part of 50 years. Certainly, they're going to need redevelopment, but my point is that maybe at the time when we developed them we thought that was the perfect model, but we learned after that it was better to have mixed housing within the not-for-profit housing system.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Timmins—James Bay, I'm sorry to interrupt you, but the time is now 10:15, and according to standing order 8(a) this House will recess until 10:30 of the clock.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: There are 90 grade 5 students from Middlebury Public School in my riding of Mississauga—Erindale visiting the Legislature today. I want to extend them a very warm welcome, along with the parents and the teacher.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming page Kyle Fitzgerald's mother, Roxanne;

father, Chad; and grandfather Charles Whiteman to the chamber.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'd like to welcome the immigrant women's leadership group to the members' gallery. They represent a partnership between Regent Park Community Health Centre, Central Neighbourhood House and the Centre for Community Learning.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like to welcome to the House the family of today's page captain, Emily Hryb. Her grandparents Don and Gail Mason are here; her mom, Jennifer; her dad, Brett; her aunt Megan; and her brother Mason. I went to school with her mom, her aunt and another aunt who isn't here today. They're a great family from North Bay and we'd like to welcome them here today.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to welcome Elias Morales, Roberto Morales, Carolina Morales, Jorge Martinez, Maria Holman, Imelda Suarez, Carmen Garcia, Calixto Ortiz and Jose Linares here on a civics course.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It is my distinct pleasure to welcome newly elected councillors of the town of Richmond Hill: Carmine Perrelli, councillor of ward 2 and Castro Lio, councillor of ward 3. Please join me in welcoming the councillors to the House.

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to introduce team Ontario today. Members in attendance: Adrian Rehorst, John Maaskant, Reg Cliche and Jack Vanderland. I want to remind everyone there's a wonderful reception this evening. Come and eat lots of fresh chicken.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I would like to introduce to the House my husband and retired chicken farmer, René Van Bommel, who's joining us today.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to introduce visiting us today from New Brunswick, Karina LeBlanc from AutismPro, and a constituent of mine, Dean Hannaford, who's director of business development for Essential Skills.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to introduce some folks that are making their way into this chamber as we speak: Mayor John Williams, a director of the Quinte Economic Development Commission; Ted Reid, a director from the Quite Economic Development Commission; Bruce Davis, executive director of Trenval Business Development Corp., Chris King, chief executive officer; Gerald Draaistra, a director and also my neighbour; and Linda Lisle, economic development of the city of Quite West.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I would like to introduce members from my riding from the Quinte Economic Development Commission. They are Mitch Panciuk, Tom Lafferty, Ross Rae, Peter McCann, Karen Poste and Mike Hewitt.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce a couple of friends of mine from Sarnia-Lambton that were down to partake in the Speaker's Christmas party and enjoyed themselves very much: Les Armstrong and George Fortin from Sarnia-Lambton. Speaker, it was a good party.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Joining us this morning in the Speaker's gallery is a former staff mem-

ber and a good friend of mine, Erin Drushel. Welcome back to the Legislature. Welcome back to Canada as well.

Happy birthday to our colleague from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale as well.

ORAL QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question to the Premier: Premier, a sign that a government has badly lost its way is when it exercises such extraordinary poor judgment as you did in passing what effectively were war measures powers and then conspired to keep them a secret from the impacted public. Premier, the Ombudsman called it "a premeditated, conscious decision not to announce the existence of the regulation or the reviving of this wartime act."

Premier, please tell us why did you pass this illegal G20 law and why did you conspire to keep it a secret from the general public?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question, but first of all, I want to thank the Ombudsman for the work that he has done. As usual, he was very, very thorough. I appreciate all of his findings and the recommendations; we intend to move on each and every one of those. In particular, the minister is already moving and establishing a new protocol.

I also appreciate the finding of the Ombudsman that our government acted with the best of intentions. When we were approached by the police with a particular request, we acted on the basis of that request. We said clearly that we could have and should have done more with respect to adequately communicating this change to Ontarians. But again, I want to thank the Ombudsman for his recommendations and assure Ontarians that we intend to act on every one of those.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, quite frankly, the old hangdog look, your old promise to do better simply isn't going to cut it anymore. This was not a simple error. It was not a simple mistake. The Ombudsman said that this was a premeditated plan to keep the general public in the dark.

Before the minister, there were cabinet meetings, including up to 14 ministers who could have put a stop to this extraordinary law and who could have said, "No, it is wrong to conspire to keep what's equivalent to the War Measures Act secret from the general public." Not one had the courage to stand up and say that this was wrong. In fact, the emails the Ombudsman has uncovered show you actually put your minds to work on how to keep these illegal war measures a secret. Premier, why do you think you can get away with this?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It was clearly a question to the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable members know that the Premier or any minister can refer a question—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would first of all note that the Ombudsman has stated in his report that the regulation, as passed by the government, had a “laudable purpose.” The regulation had the purpose of “protecting participants ... either from terrorist enemies or from protestors.” The Ombudsman also goes on to say, “There is no fair basis for suggesting that the ministry’s purpose in recommending the passage” of the regulation “was to infringe or deny freedom of expression.” Those are the words of the Ombudsman.

I’m pleased with the Ombudsman’s report. I had an opportunity to sit down and meet with the Ombudsman, to review each of his recommendations and to review his findings, and I gave him an undertaking that the government would implement each and every one of the recommendations made by the Ombudsman of the province of Ontario. And our government is going to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Quite frankly, I cannot believe the contempt the Premier is showing by refusing to answer these questions: contempt for the members of the assembly, contempt for the—

Interjections.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will come to order.

Please continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I want to see this Premier have the courage of his convictions and stand up and answer these very important questions on behalf of Ontario families.

As the Ombudsman’s plan demonstrates, then Community Safety Minister Bartolucci set in motion, once the regulation was passed through cabinet, a plan to keep it secret—a premeditated plan to cover up the secret law. The Ombudsman, in fact—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the honourable member to withdraw that last comment.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Withdraw.

In fact, the Ombudsman uncovered a June 7 email from the minister’s office which says, “Everyone was on board with drawing out the actual release of that knowledge to the public for as long as what is reasonable.... So long as we can stress as best we can that this should be kept under wraps....”

From the minister’s office, who authorized the law and keeping it secret from the general public?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The question was to the Premier, Speaker. The question was to the Premier.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Who authorized the cover-up?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Halton-Norfolk will withdraw the comment he just made.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Withdraw, Speaker.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Davenport, it’s not helpful.

Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Once again, I use the very words of the Ombudsman, who said: “There is no fair basis for suggesting that the ministry’s purpose in recommending the passage of” the regulation “was to infringe or deny freedom of expression.” The Ombudsman has also stated in his report that the regulation, as passed by the government, had “laudable purpose.”

I am pleased to have the Ombudsman’s report. I have asked—as the opposition would know, we’ve hired Chief Justice McMurtry to review the Public Works Protection Act. I’m pleased that the Ombudsman shares our view, but Mr. McMurtry’s mandate covers the areas of the recommendations of the Ombudsman—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Leeds-Grenville will withdraw the comment, and if this language persists, I’m just going to start to name the members.

Mr. Steve Clark: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Justice McMurtry’s deliberations, of course, will benefit the Ombudsman’s report, and the recommendations of the Ombudsman will be very helpful to Mr. McMurtry.

Following Justice McMurtry’s advice, we’ll make any needed amendments to the Public Works Protection Act to ensure that it reflects the security concerns of the province and the values of our society—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier of the province of Ontario concerning the Premier’s conduct and that of his office, and Premier, you can’t duck and hide from these important questions. Please stand up and respond.

According to the Ombudsman, your office, the Premier’s office of Ontario, also had its fingerprints on the illegal G20 regulation and the plot to keep it a secret. On page 57, the Ombudsman quotes from a Ministry of Community Safety email which states that the Premier’s office had also been consulted and “are fine with this moving forward.”

I want to know: Did the Premier of the province himself authorize this secret law and the premeditated plan to keep it secret from the general public?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: As the Ombudsman pointed out—

Interjections.

Interjection: If it's not so, say so.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, it is directly on the actions and the behaviour of the Premier—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member from Renfrew, speaking—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No. No.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I am going to name the member from Peterborough, Jeff—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I don't need any help.

I'm going to name the member from Peterborough, Jeff Leal. I warned the House about the use of that word.

Sergeant-at-Arms?

Mr. Leal was escorted from the chamber.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader, I really don't care if you believe it or not.

Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: As the Ombudsman pointed out, the regulation met the legal requirements for publicizing regulations, but I think, in fairness, as he also pointed out, technical compliance was not good enough and e-Laws posting is not good enough. We should have communicated properly, clearly and widely. I have said this and others in the government have said this.

My colleague needs to remember the potential security threat. We had 20 of the probably top targets for terrorists in the province of Ontario, in downtown Toronto, where the federal government decided to have this particular gathering of international people. Second, we had threats being made by the Black Bloc that there was going to be violence. Third, there was a bombing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I will ask for the fourth time for the Premier of this province to stand up and be accountable for the decisions that he made and those of the ministers of his government.

Premier, the Minister of Community Safety demonstrated extraordinarily poor judgment, recommending an illegal regulation that invoked war measures powers and then put in place a premeditated plan to keep it secret from the general public. When he got caught he should have done the honourable thing and resigned, and if he didn't and I were Premier, I would fire that minister on the spot.

Premier, will you do the right thing? Will you stand up and be accountable for the act you brought forward and

the plan to keep it secret? Will you fire Minister Bartolucci from cabinet today?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I do not recall the Ombudsman, when I read his report, calling for the recommendation that the Leader of the Opposition has happened to make. I certainly am in compliance with that.

I know that as members of the opposition—and I hear a lot of noise out there—you continue to call, on any particular instance, for the resignation of ministers. That is what the opposition happens to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I will ask for the fifth time for the Premier of this province to stand up and be accountable for his government and his minister's decisions. No doubt, this resembles a government on its last legs when it thinks it's the right thing to do to bring in a war measures act and then invoke a premeditated plan to keep it secret from the general public. It is far too late to say you're sorry and that you're going to do better. Premier, with all due respect, you're showing incredible contempt for the members of the assembly and Ontario families by refusing to answer these questions.

1050

Here are the facts. You have revived war measures. You had a premeditated plan to keep it secret from the public, and you refused to fire the minister who showed such extraordinary bad judgment. Why is it—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I find it astounding that the Leader of the Opposition who, in order to gain the power of the leadership of his party, was prepared to make a deal with the member for Lanark, that deal being to abolish the Human Rights Commission of Ontario—I find it astounding that the same leader today would characterize himself as a defender of civil rights in the province of Ontario.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Cabinet ministers met in secret to pass a wartime regulations act under the Public Works Protection Act last June. My question is a simple one: Can the Premier tell us exactly who was at that meeting?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I don't think it's going to come as a great shock to the people of Ontario that cabinet meets in secret on a regular basis. That's our responsibility. In fact, we take an oath. We are sworn to secrecy when it comes to discussing those kinds of matters.

I want to, once again, take this opportunity to thank the Ombudsman for his work, to assure Ontarians that we take responsibility for failing to properly communicate the change we had made. It was significant and deserved greater effort on our part. I also want to thank the Ombudsman for his finding that we acted with the best of intentions.

Our intention now is to act on those recommendations. It's appropriate and prudent that we wait for the recommendations that are forthcoming from—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I name John Yakabuski, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. Yakabuski was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday, the Ombudsman noted that individuals were consulted before the government passed their illegal and unconstitutional regulation that led to the loss of civil rights and mass arrests in this province. Did the Premier, in any way, consult with constitutional experts or legal experts of any kind, and if so, what concerns did they express?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety.

Hon. James J. Bradley: As the member would know, the government receives its advice from government lawyers when crafting legislation. I'm not an appeals court judge, so I can't make a judgment as to whether something is illegal or something is unconstitutional. That, of course, is why we have appointed former Chief Justice Roy McMurtry of Ontario, an eminent justice, a person who has had many responsibilities both in this House and outside this House, to look into the law and make a determination as to whether this law is appropriate in the year 2010. The law originally, as you know, was constructed in 1939, and this is a regulation from that law.

So I am looking forward with anticipation to the deliberations of Justice McMurtry, and I suspect the member is as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, eureka. Maybe they should have consulted before they passed the regulation.

I'm trying to figure out exactly what the Premier was thinking. He's a lawyer, but he and his government have demonstrated appallingly poor legal judgment with their actions. Did the Premier not, at any time, have any concerns, or did he really think it was perfectly okay to secretly enact an illegal and unconstitutional wartime regulation?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Again, I say to the member, not being a lawyer, not being a constitutional lawyer, but particularly not being an appeals judge, that I'm unable to make that determination as to whether something is illegal or unconstitutional. That is exactly why we have engaged former Ontario Chief Justice Roy McMurtry to take a very careful look at the law as it exists at the present time. This was a regulation that was passed as a result of that law. I think that Justice McMurtry will benefit immensely from the recommendations that have been made by the Ombudsman of Ontario and that he will take into account those recommendations.

I know that the member will be looking forward with anticipation, as well, to the deliberations of Mr. McMurtry

and the recommendations that are forthcoming from those particular deliberations.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. If the Premier felt that there was nothing at all wrong with this regulation—and he still seems quite certain of that fact six months later—why didn't he tell anybody when he passed it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to just quote again from the Ombudsman's report, because I think it's very helpful, and I think he speaks throughout to the public interest, which is, I think, what all of us are determined to uphold here.

He says, among other things, "The government has announced that the Public Works Protection Act will be reviewed.... This is a step in the right direction. I have recommended that in the context of this review, the ministry should take steps to revise or replace the act." We are giving that very careful consideration. As I say, we look forward to the report of the Honourable Mr. Justice Roy McMurtry.

He also says, "On November 1, 2010, the minister confirmed on behalf of the government his unequivocal commitment to act on my recommendations in a timely manner. I am satisfied with the minister's response to my recommendations and will monitor the ministry's progress in implementing them."

Again, we respect the findings. We endorse the recommendations. We look forward to acting on those in concert with Mr. Justice Roy McMurtry's recommendations as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier released a media statement during the G20 summit. Why didn't he use that opportunity to clarify the misinformation about the illegal and unconstitutional law that he passed?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think it's instructive to look at the recommendations that the Ombudsman has made, that I have given unequivocal assurance that the government will implement. He says, "The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services should take steps to revise or replace the Public Works Protection Act." The government will do that.

"The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services should examine whether the range of police powers conferred by the Public Works Protection Act should be retained or imported into any revised statute." We are prepared to do that.

He says, "The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services should develop a protocol that would call for public information campaigns when police powers are modified by subordinate legislation, particularly in protest situations." We are already doing that.

"The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services should report back ... in six months...." I have

given the assurance that we will give a full and detailed report to the Ombudsman on the progress which has been made—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There can be no doubt: What happened during the G20 showed a chilling disregard for people's civil liberties and for democracy itself. The Premier passed an illegal and unconstitutional wartime law and not only didn't debate it, but he bent over backwards to hide it from the public.

Ontarians are owed an apology. When will the Premier provide one for his shocking failure to uphold the trust that the people of this province should be able to have in him?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Oh, we'll let the honourable member take that call.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

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Hon. James J. Bradley: I think what's important is that the government has indicated very clearly that it believes that better communication would have been very helpful in this particular case. But it has also indicated clearly that it's prepared to take a variety of actions that the Ombudsman happens to have recommended to us.

I think I remember that in the Ombudsman's report a reference made to the fact that, in 1990, the NDP government reviewed the Public Works Protection Act, had an opportunity to make changes to it and chose not to do so. Now, they may have had very good reasons for not changing it, but I do say that in 1990 the NDP government did have that opportunity, and chose on that occasion not to revise the act.

The act was in place, it was passed by the Legislature a number of years ago, and the regulation flowed from that particular act—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. The former Minister of Community Safety signed off on the illegal G20 law that invoked war measures in Toronto. The war measures law then went to the legislation and regulations committee for approval on May 31. Eight ministers sit on that cabinet committee. On June 2, a five-member cabinet meeting approved the illegal law. In all, up to 14 ministers have their fingerprints on the illegal G20 law.

According to the Ombudsman, you say that the names of the ministers who agreed to invoke martial law are solicitor-client privilege. Well, Premier, you're the client: You can waive the privilege. Which of your ministers should be held accountable for invoking the illegal war measures legislation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the minister.

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, I should point out to the member that when you look at the number of people who are looking into this particular law, we have the Toronto Police Services Board, which is conducting an inquiry under Justice John Morden; we have the Office of the Independent Police Review Director, which is receiving complaints from the public and will be reporting back on those particular complaints; the RCMP, the federal police force, which is conducting an internal review; we have the Special Investigations Unit, which is conducting a review; and we have Justice McMurtry, who is reviewing the Public Works Protection Act. So we have a number of different reviews that are going on at the present time, including the committee of the House of Commons, where these matters are being deliberated. Those, I think, will—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I did ask the Premier, but I would say to the minister that all of the things that you just mentioned don't include a review of what this government did and don't name names, and that's what we're asking about right now.

The plan for the illegal G20 law was vetted by Premier McGuinty and several of his ministers. The plan included a strategy to deflect any public criticism of the very war measures act you passed if your secret got out. Paragraph 210 of the Ombudsman's report describes the emails that show the recommended plan was to blame and "an inattentive media" for the lack of public notice of a war measures law you deliberately buried. Keeping an illegal law a secret is bad enough, but the McGuinty Liberals' propaganda plan is utterly disgraceful.

If he will not resign, Minister or Premier, why won't you fire Minister Bartolucci?

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, may I say to members of the Legislature something that I think they will know, and that is that the Ombudsman did not call for anybody to be fired. I am not calling for anyone—I'm complying with what the Ombudsman did not say in this particular case.

I go back to the fact that it is very difficult for many people in this province to understand that your party, if it were to be elected as the next government of Ontario, is committed to abolishing the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and that this same party in the province of Ontario would be that which wishes to stand now before the people of this province and say that they are going to save civil liberties.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier met with Toronto's new mayor to discuss the future of Transit City. Earlier this year, the Premier and his government yanked \$4 billion worth of Transit City funding. Following his meeting yesterday, has the Premier now completely abandoned Transit City, yes or no?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We've been very clear that the funding that is going to the city of Toronto remains in the envelope to go to the city of Toronto. It's the biggest investment in transit in a generation. There's a plan in place to build all those projects—five projects over 10 years—and I think the member opposite knows that.

The Premier had a good meeting with Mayor Ford yesterday, as has been reported. As we've both said, we'll continue to work with the city. The council has yet to meet. It's important for the TTC and Metrolinx to work through the technical details. We'll continue to work with them.

We want to build transit in the city of Toronto. That's what this is all about.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Toronto families want their politicians to stop playing games, get the shovels in the ground and build Transit City. Along Eglinton Avenue, families have been waiting for decades for better public transit. Fifteen years ago, these families saw a previous provincial government kill a public transit plan; now it looks like the same thing is about to happen under the McGuinty government. Will this Premier take decisive action to make sure that the Eglinton LRT is built on schedule, or will he make the same mistake as Mike Harris?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite really needs to talk to the councillors in Toronto. She needs to talk to city council. She needs to encourage them to have that conversation with the mayor. But this is a member who has consistently voted against the air-rail link. She has not been in favour of transit in Toronto. In 2007, Howard Hampton, the then leader of the NDP—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the honourable member that we use riding names.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member for Kenora-Rainy River said, "We don't need another subway mega-project ... extending the subway ... into a lightly populated York region."

This party has consistently not been supportive of transit. We need them onside, supporting transit across the GTHA and across the province. They need to talk to city council. City council needs to work with the mayor. We want to build transit in the GTHA.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Health. In the Auditor General's annual report, the auditor raised concerns about emergency room wait times. But he also recognized Ontario's leadership in bringing down those wait times and the progress that has been made. He cited the adage, "You can't manage what you can't measure."

Oakville families want to know that high-quality emergency health care is there when they need it, and in

order to make that real in Ontario we need to be able to measure that progress. My question this morning to the minister is, can you please speak to the work Ontario has done to address wait times in my community and throughout the province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Oakville for his question.

Ontario was the first province to start measuring wait times in our emergency departments, and we are already starting to see the results. Oakville is a good example of that. At the Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital, our investments in ERs mean that 96% of people are being seen within the target time, a 30% reduction in wait times since we started measuring in 2008. These are significant and meaningful results for the people in Oakville.

Across Ontario, our targeted investments mean that 85% of people going to emergency rooms are now being seen within our target—85%. We've seen a 9% reduction in time spent in emergency departments.

I'm proud to be part of a government that is making these investments, in contrast to the opposition, who have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's clear that the investments in our wait time reduction plan are working and they're starting to make a difference for families in my riding of Oakville, but emergency wait times are just one part of the challenge. Being able to get timely access to surgeries, MRIs, CT scans and ultrasounds are also critical components of a strong and healthy system.

A report that was released on Monday from the Fraser Institute said that unfortunately, wait times for surgeries are growing across Canada. Can the minister please inform the House whether or not this is the case for the province of Ontario?

1110

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We're not just making progress. Ontario is actually leading the country, according to the Fraser Institute, an organization not generally known for its enthusiastic support of the Liberal Party. Their most recent report shows that Ontario has the shortest wait times for CT scans, for MRIs, for ultrasounds, and we've got one of the shortest wait times for specialist consultants.

This report confirms what we've already heard from the Wait Time Alliance. Their 2010 report card gave Ontario straight As for reducing wait times for hips, knees, cancer, cataract and cardiac surgeries.

Within the Halton health care system, wait times for hip replacements are down 122 days. That's a 50% reduction in wait times. Surgeries for knee replacements are down 28%, and 77% for CT scans.

I'm proud of the success that we're having, and we look forward to doing more.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Premier. McGuinty Liberals would like to think Premier

McGuinty and Pierre Trudeau have a shared respect for civil liberties and the charter in common. The Ombudsman, however, shows that the only thing they really have in common is declaring martial law. But even there, Premier McGuinty does not measure up, because at least Trudeau held a public debate when he invoked war measures.

What made you think you could get away with keeping your illegal war measures a secret from the people of the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the minister.

Interjections.

Hon. James J. Bradley: There's considerable noise coming from the opposition.

I would first of all draw the context. I know it's difficult for the Conservative Party, because on the one side, you want to be on the side of law and order, and on the other side, today, you want to be defending civil liberties. So it's a difficult proposition for the party to be able to do both of those.

You will know the context of the situation. Your federal friends insisted that the G20 be in downtown Toronto, against the advice of the city of Toronto, against the advice of the Ontario government. As a result, 20 of the top terrorist targets in the world were assembled in downtown Toronto, with all kinds of threats being made to those individuals and to that conference.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Minister, your answer had nothing to do with my question.

The Ombudsman put it best when he said about your illegal war measures law that "it may have been the best-kept secret in Ontario's legislative history...." But even after you got caught, your office continued to say that your war measures didn't provide police with new powers, and you're still at it. This morning, you said that only two people were arrested under your war measures act, and the Ombudsman posted a message on Twitter to correct you even this morning. This is an embarrassment to this House. How can you expect the public of Ontario to have confidence in you and the former minister when you continue to exercise such outrageous judgment?

One thing is for sure: The Ombudsman's report, Caught in the Act, will not be hidden on this side of the House. We will remind the people of the province of Ontario, right through to the evening of October 6, about the actions of this government.

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Lanark has been constantly and consistently interjecting today. If he persists, I will have to warn him.

Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member probably didn't have time to share this with the House, but he will know that the Ombudsman complimented the government of Ontario on its response to his report. He was very pleased with the degree of co-operation that he had from the government of Ontario, and he indicated that in his press

conference and in his report. We are prepared to comply with all of the recommendations that he has in that particular report. I think he recognized as well the context in which the government was developing a law, with all of the threats that I have mentioned and the circumstances that were facing the government at the time.

Had something untoward happened to any one of those people who was in downtown Toronto, where the federal government insisted on having this, I suspect that the questions that would be coming to me today would be far different from those which are being asked now.

ACCESS TO PUBLIC LANDS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. For many weeks now, I've been raising the issue that is frustrating northerners more than a whole bunch of other issues that you're frustrating them with as a government, and that is access to crown roads.

You keep on saying, at the end of the day, that nothing can be done and if people want to go hunting or fishing or blueberry picking, they're going to have to walk into those roads that they've used for generations by way of motorized vehicles.

Further, it is alleged, and I've raised it in the House before, that there are cases where MNR staff have themselves bought outfitters' camps and used their positions within the MNR to block some of those roads. You have said as recently as yesterday in this House that in fact no such case exists. I have one. The Ombudsman of Ontario actually investigated one. I'd like to send that over to you so you can reinvestigate it and try to do something about what is a travesty in northern Ontario.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I'm happy to answer this question. I'm pleased that the member is in the House today to hear the answer.

Yesterday, I was asked by the member from Algoma-Manitoulin about a question that had been raised by the member previously. It was with regard to Fushimi Lake Provincial Park and how it was subjected to an unauthorized motorized vehicle restriction. I'm really pleased that I have an opportunity to answer the question again. Had the member from Timmins-James Bay brought this particular case to my attention weeks ago, when I had originally asked, instead of waiting for question period, I would have been able to tell him that this restriction was a matter of public safety. There were concerns with regard to snowmobilers entering the park through unauthorized access points, particularly over frozen creeks.

I'm certain that everybody in this House would agree that public safety and liability is what we should take with utmost seriousness.

Snowmobile access is allowed to continue through—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, you're mixing up two issues. The issue of the Fushimi park, which you're trying to refer to, I raised with you as far back as last year, and you promised at that time you were going to fix

it. You then came into the House yesterday and said you're not. The issue I'm raising today is the one that I've raised previously: MNR staff have been accused of having built outfitters' camps, gotten land under the act, and have used that land to their own benefit while ministry employees.

I've sent over an investigation by the Ombudsman that points to one investigation that was whitewashed by your ministry. Will you look into that and get back to this House and clarify this issue once and for all?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: As I stated yesterday, the northern residents continue to enjoy unrestricted access to the vast majority of Ontario's crown lands. We always work to balance the public's access to recreational activities and opportunities with the need to protect, promote and preserve our wilderness and enhance remote areas.

To the allegations with regard to the MNR officials benefiting from planning decisions: I have had staff look into the matter, and we have yet to confirm a specific case of conflict-of-interest violation. But as I said, if anyone knows of a specific case, I would encourage them to bring it to my attention. My door is always open.

MNR staff do an outstanding job of protecting our natural resources. They're often active members of our community, in which they work and live.

It's important that access decisions are made through forest management and land use planning, both of which require public planning. I encourage anybody who has interest to participate in our public consultation process.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Ontario's injured workers face huge difficulties in coping with the consequences of their injuries. In particular, mobility issues make it very difficult to travel to deposit their benefit cheques in the bank or to cash their cheque. I recently received a letter from the WSIB stating that it is now offering direct deposit of loss-of-earnings benefits for injured workers.

Minister, having heard complaints from my many constituents about this issue, I'm happy to see that WSIB has taken this step. Can you give us more details about how this change is going to work and what it means for Ontario's injured workers?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'm pleased that the member has raised this issue and the concerns surrounding this matter. I'm also pleased that the WSIB has heard the concerns of injured workers and has taken action.

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Previously, direct deposit was only available on monthly benefits such as pension payments, but now, with these improvements that have been made, it'll allow workers to receive their biweekly payments by direct deposit. So what will this do? This will help workers in terms of knowing that their cheques are secure, knowing that they're going directly into their bank accounts. This will bring great relief to those injured workers.

As well, with that relief and that help to those injured workers, it would also help the WSIB's administrative

costs. So it helps on two fronts. This strives to respond to the needs of their customers, who are the injured workers. This is an excellent initiative by the WSIB, working very closely with injured workers and advocacy from members like the member from Willowdale.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Injured workers in Willowdale and, indeed, Ontario will welcome the convenience of having their benefits deposited directly into their accounts. But Minister, this is not the only concern that injured workers have here in Ontario. As we emerge from the global recession, and especially during the holiday season, many injured workers and their families are worried about their benefit levels.

Minister, what are you doing and what is our government doing about benefit levels for Ontario's injured workers?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Unlike the parties opposite, this government has taken measures to help injured workers by increasing their benefits.

We all remember the 1990s, when the NDP brought forward the Friedland formula. Injured workers will tell you that is their "F" word. It was made even more regressive under a Conservative government. They exacerbated the situation and they virtually cut benefits to injured workers by 30%, unlike this government, which has increased benefits to the tune of 9% to injured workers.

We understand that injured workers, especially in these challenging times, need government's help. So we are there working with injured worker groups, working with the WSIB and working with employers. We understand that we're all in this together, unlike the parties opposite.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. In light of the fact that the Premier has refused to answer questions related to the conduct of Minister Bartolucci in passing and suppressing the G20 regulation, will the Premier agree to allow Minister Bartolucci personally to respond so that he can accept his ministerial responsibility and offer his resignation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety.

Hon. James J. Bradley: As my friend—
Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): This will be the final warning for the member from Lanark, and he should be in his seat as well.

Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: As the member would know—he's a member who has been in the Legislature for some period of time and he would be aware of the rules of the Legislature—all questions dealing with the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services are to be directed to the minister who happens to have this position at this time.

I have indicated clearly that I'm prepared to answer any and all of the very legitimate questions that my friends on the opposite benches are prepared to direct to me. Therefore, I am here to answer those questions in any way that I guess I deem appropriate. I will try to be as lucid as possible in my answers to you, but I am here to answer those questions and I'm prepared to be here today and tomorrow.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Actually, we're well familiar with the standing orders. In fact, standing order 37(e) states specifically that a minister would be able to refer to the subject matter that is involved. We're talking about a subject matter that involved the actions of Minister Bartolucci. He is the minister who was responsible for the actions. We are now asking the Premier to allow that minister to stand in his place, explain his actions, take ministerial responsibility and do the right thing and offer his resignation for his actions.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm trying to recall, as no doubt my good friend and colleague from Carleton-Mississippi Mills is trying to recall today, any instance in the House where that has ever been undertaken. You may wish to consult with the esteemed member from Mississippi Mills, who some in your party are trying to dump from his position as the member for Mississippi Mills. I think it would be instructive if, rather than consulting with the member beside you, who has been trying to undermine the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills, in fact you consult with the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills, who is a long-standing and esteemed member of this House, one who has gained the respect of the people of his constituency and one who has gained the respect of all of the people in this House. Rather than that happening, I think you should be worried about someone trying to dump the member—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

New question.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Does the minister think it's appropriate that Ontario parents are waiting more than a year for licensed child care for their infants?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I know that the Minister of Education will look forward to answering this question because, as the member opposite likely knows, the file of child care was transferred to the Ministry of Education.

We did that a number of months ago in order to recognize the fact that when children start in child care, it's the beginning of their formal education. We want to ensure that the processes and the protections that are put in place and the education and learning that begin start at the earliest days, upon them being placed in child care—as I did with my own children; you talk to your kids about the first day of child care as their first day of school, and that is the reality for families. That is now the

reality here in our government structures, and we're very, very proud of that change.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister might not want to face it, but the reality is faced by a lot of parents in this province. They cannot get child care for their infants. In Kenora, there are only nine licensed child care spots—nine spots in Kenora. In a city of 15,000 people, families are waiting more than a year for child care, causing emotional and financial turmoil in those households.

Consider Erin, a new mom from Kenora, who writes, "As a mother, my greatest priority is the safety and well-being of my son. I should not have to rely on unregistered and unmonitored home daycare upon my return to work."

When will this government start taking the concerns of new parents like Erin seriously?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: This is a very, very important issue, and I have to say that I'm delighted now that I have the responsibility of working with those in the child care sector as we continue to improve access to those services.

Since we've come to government, we have increased the number of spaces in the province by 67,000. Now, 22,000 of those are a result of our investments in Best Start.

But what I can say to the honourable member is that our commitment to full-day kindergarten will go a long way to expanding access to regulated child care spaces. For those families who are using regulated spaces for their four- and five-year-old children, those children will now move to the regular school system, thereby freeing up space in child care facilities for those families who are awaiting infant care in child care facilities.

Our investment in full-day kindergarten is going to have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, full-day kindergarten is clearly popular as we have seen a high level of demand for the program across the province. However, there are some areas where all the students who want to get into the program are not being accommodated.

In response to this, the Peel District School Board has offered 10 additional classes this year. However, this decision is costing approximately \$1.3 million more than the board was funded for this first phase of implementation.

As a result, trustees voted to defer the launching of the program at five Peel schools until the 2012-13 school year.

1130

Minister, what is our government doing to meet the ever-increasing demand for full-day kindergarten? And what is our plan to ensure—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: First of all, we know that parents love full-day kindergarten and we are not surprised that families are very eager to participate in this program. We have, however, recognized that it is going to be a challenge. Moving forward there are many things that must be considered, and that is why we're taking a staged approach. That is why, when we invited school boards to bring us their ideas on how to roll out in their boards, we made very clear the money that was going to be available for this and we said to them, "Now, you need to present your plan."

I think it is regrettable. We've been very clear with what resources would be available. In the member's case, the board has decided to, perhaps, accept beyond the funding that we said we would make available. I think it's really unfortunate when commitments are made and then they're withdrawn from the people in the jurisdiction.

We will continue. We are committed to full-day—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Minister, as we work towards full implementation, my constituents are eager to have their children enrolled in this program. We know full-day kindergarten is the best way to ensure our society moves forward and produces a stronger Ontario for the future.

I also know that full-day kindergarten is just one of the many investments that the McGuinty government has made to strengthen public education in Peel, though I have been hearing from my constituents that the Peel board is underfunded.

For many constituents in Mississauga-Brampton South and for those of my colleagues in the Peel region, could you inform this House, are we doing enough to support our students? And is the Peel board underfunded?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: What I can say, and what I would hope all members in this House would say to their constituents, is that this government has increased funding in education by 40%.

The other thing we are committed to is full-day kindergarten, unlike the other party, who has not committed to it. They call it a frill. They are not committed to maintaining this program. The member can tell her constituents that in 2015 all families will have access to full-day kindergarten.

With respect to Peel, I can say as well that we have increased funding to the Peel board by \$64 million. That is a 70% increase in funding from the time we took government for the Peel board, for the member's constituents. There have been 50 new schools built in Peel.

We are committed to working with the elected representatives from Peel, as they do a very good job of meeting the needs of their families and their students. There's more—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Premier. We've been watching you, Premier, for the entire question period, which is almost now expired, and I might say that Ontario has been watching you as well on some very important questions that concern everyone in this province. You have spent the entire question period laughing, joking and conversing with members of your caucus on either side and around you—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a second.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Start the clock. I would just ask the member to get straight to his question, please.

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is this: Does the Premier take these questions and this issue seriously or not?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to remind all members about notes that travel through this chamber. Yes, it's a very useful way for us to converse with one another or converse with our staff, but I'm extremely disappointed in a note that has come to my attention that passed from one side of this House to another today. I don't know if it was written as a tongue-in-cheek note or not, but I don't think it's appropriate, in my opinion of what I read in this note. The author of this note knows who sent it and knows where it went, because I'm sure the author knows exactly the note I'm talking about. I don't need an apology in this House, but I would appreciate an apology from the author of this to its recipient. I'll leave it at that. Stuff like this is not helpful in the chamber.

DEFERRED VOTES

HELPING ONTARIO FAMILIES AND MANAGING RESPONSIBLY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'AIDE AUX FAMILLES ONTARIENNES ET LA GESTION RESPONSABLE

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures

and other matters / Projet de loi 135, Loi concernant les mesures financières et budgétaires et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1136 to 1141.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Fonseca, Peter
Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John
Balkissoon, Bas	Gélinas, France
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael
Bentley, Christopher	Hampton, Howard
Best, Margaret	Hoskins, Eric
Bisson, Gilles	Hoy, Pat
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda
Brown, Michael A.	Kormos, Peter
Brownell, Jim	Kular, Kuldip
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Carroll, Aileen	Levac, Dave
Chan, Michael	Mangat, Amrit
Chiarelli, Bob	Marchese, Rosario
Colle, Mike	Matthews, Deborah
Crozier, Bruce	Mauro, Bill
Delaney, Bob	McGuinty, Dalton
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted
Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil
DiNovo, Cheri	Meilleur, Madeleine
Dombrowsky, Leona	Miller, Paul
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mitchell, Carol
	Moridi, Reza
	Murray, Glen R.
	Naqvi, Yasir
	Oraziotti, David
	Pendergast, Leeanna
	Phillips, Gerry
	Prue, Michael
	Pupatello, Sandra
	Qadri, Shafiq
	Ramal, Khalil
	Ramsay, David
	Rinaidi, Lou
	Ruprecht, Tony
	Sandals, Liz
	Sergio, Mario
	Smith, Monique
	Sorbara, Greg
	Sousa, Charles
	Tabuns, Peter
	Takhar, Harinder S.
	Van Bommel, Maria
	Wilkinson, John
	Wynne, Kathleen O.
	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank
Clark, Steve	Martiniuk, Gerry
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Hillier, Randy	Murdoch, Bill
	O'Toole, John
	Quellette, Jerry J.
	Savoline, Joyce
	Shurman, Peter
	Sterling, Norman W.
	Wilson, Jim
	Witmer, Elizabeth

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 72; the nays are 21.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I am in receipt of notice of identical points of privilege filed by the member for Thornhill, Mr. Shurman, and the member for Simcoe-Grey, Mr. Wilson. Without hearing further from the members, I am prepared to make my ruling on the basis of the written statements, as standing order 21(d) allows me to do.

The members relate that following question period on December 7, they and the member for Whitby-Oshawa were followed along the west hallway and subsequently into the west elevators by a Liberal caucus staff person

with a video camera. The members further assert that their ability to have a private conversation was, as a result, hindered, and that this constituted a breach of privilege, since they were obstructed from performing their parliamentary duties.

Let me begin by saying in the strongest possible language that an allegation of a breach of privilege is a serious matter. It should not be made lightly or with any other motivation than the protection of the institution of Parliament and the members who serve it.

The heads of privilege are very few and their application is very narrow. As Speakers have said on numerous occasions in the past, when it comes to obstruction, privilege very specifically applies to "parliamentary duties." This does not include constituency matters, attendance or invitations to functions outside this place, and certainly not the ability to have a private conversation in a public space. Obstruction of a member in his or her effort to carry out parliamentary duties refers to such things as being physically prevented from attending the House or severely intimidated from speaking on a matter before the House.

The members have characterized the staffer's videotaping of elected members in the hallways as "reprehensible." I myself find the practice distasteful at best. In this technological age, when video and photographic devices are so common, I can see that it is tempting to use them for political purposes. Unfortunately, that temptation is succumbed to all too frequently. Given that, I am not surprised the practice has given rise to the complaints from the members for Thornhill and Simcoe-Grey. I would prefer if the political process rose to a level of dignity our surroundings here suggest it deserves. So I would ask all members to reflect on what I've said and give it consideration in the future.

Beyond the use of these devices, I am increasingly alarmed at activity initiated and engaged in by both sides of the House that I consider to be unworthy of this place. It sometimes seems that more effort goes into stunts and "gotcha" politics than thoughtful consideration and mature debate on the significant issues at hand. I've said before and I will repeat: The people of this province deserve better conduct from their elected representatives.

I want to thank the honourable members for their submissions. They have not made a *prima facie* case of breach of privilege. I will, though, hear the second point of privilege that was submitted properly to my office from the member from Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Do you want to hear it now, Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would prefer to.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I would like to present it this afternoon at 3 o'clock, with your indulgence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Speaker is prepared to hear that this afternoon at 3 o'clock.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1148 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I'm pleased to introduce from the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers, sitting in the member's gallery, John Schindler, president and chair; Danny Young, acting CEO; and Edwina McGroddy, director of policy, government and stakeholder relations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Earlier today, we were joined by a special group of people from my community of Oakville. They arrived after the introductions, unfortunately, but they were here from the White Oaks High School Futures Program and they were here with their teachers, parents and guests.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just wanted to correct the record of yesterday's debate on Bill 135, section 13. I misspoke; I said that it "ends" in May instead of "starts" in May. So I would like to correct the record.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. That is a point of order; a member is allowed to correct their own record.

Having received proper notice of a point of privilege from the member from Thornhill, I will recognize the member at this point.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACT

Mr. Peter Shurman: I do rise on a point of privilege on a matter for which I did give proper written notice. The issue relates to the statement the Minister of Tourism and Culture made in this House regarding a \$50,000 contract that was awarded to one Peter Van Kessel, which he stated was in accordance with government procurement rules; that is, bid competitively.

As you recall, during question period on December 2 several questions were put to the minister about the so-called new direction he and his government are taking at the Niagara Parks Commission. This new direction looks remarkably similar to the one Premier McGuinty and his former health minister took in the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle: a well-connected Liberal—this time Fay Booker, chair of the Niagara Parks Commission—who doesn't think procurement rules apply to her; a sham bidding process in which the third-highest bidder, who by coincidence has ties to the chair, was awarded a contract as an external auditor; the same chair angling to be paid twice as much to do the same work.

The question I asked related to the \$50,000 contract that was awarded to Mr. Van Kessel, who is a friend of the same Fay Booker. I asked the minister to explain why Ms. Booker handed her friend the sweetheart deal worth \$50,000. Given all the echoes of eHealth and Premier McGuinty's solemn vow that he had fixed the problems

that led to the billion-dollar boondoggle, the question—and more importantly, the minister's answer—is a serious matter of public interest. The answer the minister gave, however, was totally inaccurate.

He said, about the \$50,000 contract—and I'm quoting from Hansard: "That went through a competitive process, and the honourable member is wrong." Yet Ms. Booker herself confirms that the \$50,000 contract did not go through a competitive process. Therefore, I was not wrong, which begs the question, why did the minister skirt the facts as the opposition was exposing the fact that the government was conducting business as usual?

A story appearing in the December 2, 2010, edition of the Niagara Falls Review elaborates on Ms. Booker's account of the sweetheart deal that was handed to her friend. The Niagara Falls Review reported that, "When she came to the commission in the spring, she realized no one had been assigned to oversee the boat tour request for proposals. She told ... John Kernahan to hire someone and suggested names, including Van Kessel." The admission of the chair who handed out the sweetheart deal contradicts the statement the Minister of Tourism made in this House.

I do not bring this matter forward lightly. Asking you to find a member of provincial Parliament—in particular, a minister of the crown—in contempt is a serious matter. The Minister of Tourism wanted members of this assembly and Ontario families to believe that he and his hand-picked chair did not directly award this contract. The chair, however, says the opposite.

This was not an inadvertent slip of the tongue by the minister. The same day the minister made the remark, my colleague the member for Wellington–Halton Hills alerted him to Ms. Booker's statement and encouraged the minister to correct the record, and he did not. I stood on a point of order, which was ruled as not being a point of order, but did also ask for the record to be corrected, but he did not.

The minister was asked further questions about the Niagara Parks Commission each day of the week, including one that asked him to clarify the inconsistency of his remarks—that was this week. He did not retract his misleading statements, sticking to prepared talking points instead. He attended the late show debate last night, but showed his recalcitrance in standing by his inaccurate statement and refusing to clear up the inconsistency between it and the chair's account. He even had the audacity to call upon the members of the opposition to apologize for doing their job of asking these hard questions. It appears the Liberal government's new credo is that the best defence is a good offence. The minister clearly and deliberately adopted the statement he made in this House in response to my question of December 2.

Finally, after I filed this point of privilege yesterday, the minister did take some action. While I believe the minister to be a gentleman, his half-hearted point of order this morning failed to fully correct the record. He failed to come clean, admit the Van Kessel contract was sole-sourced and that the answer he gave in the House on

December 2, 2010, was wrong. Having reviewed the Hansard myself from this morning, he referred only to the awarding of a contract that had to do with auditing of the Niagara Parks Commission and not to the boat tour. Furthermore, his point of order did not explain why he is contradicting his own appointee.

The inconsistency between the minister and his appointee is sufficient grounds to establish a *prima facie* case of contempt. Page 111 of the 22nd edition of Erskine May states, “The Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt.”

Parliamentary precedent supports finding that a *prima facie* case of contempt has been made. On May 4 of this year, Speaker Toth of Saskatchewan’s Legislative Assembly was asked to rule on facts and circumstances very similar to the ones here. A minister of the crown made a statement in the House that certain public consultations on a matter of public policy had occurred. An officer of the Legislature, who had a role in overseeing the area of public policy, said the consultations had not occurred. Speaker Toth found that the inconsistency in the statements was sufficient to establish a *prima facie* case of contempt. In his ruling, the Speaker reflected on the “distinct impression” that was left by the minister’s comments. He ruled that the distinct impression the minister left was false and apt to mislead.

Speaker, I respectfully submit that a *prima facie* case of contempt of this House has been made for very similar reasons. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I would argue that, in fact, there is no issue of contempt in this particular circumstance. I will go through some of the points made by the member for Thornhill.

In his letter, the member for Thornhill took exception to the statement made by Minister Chan in response to a question, where he said, “That went through a competitive process....” In fact, today in the House, the Minister of Tourism, Minister Chan, stated, “Mr. Speaker: I wish to clarify remarks I made on Thursday, December 2. I was referring to the contract the Niagara Parks Commission entered into for external auditors, Grant Thornton, which was competitively tendered in August.” As such, the minister has corrected the record, and if the member for Thornhill is seeking further information, it is open to him to ask that question.

The minister did correct the record, and that is referred to in a number of the precedents the member for Thornhill has referred to as being a component of not—sorry, it is a component of contempt not to have corrected the record. In this case, the minister has corrected the record.

I note, Mr. Speaker, that on December 2, you noted in a ruling on the previous point of order, “I am sure the minister, if he has erred, will correct his record,” which he did today.

I’d just like to take this opportunity to distinguish the precedents that have been referred to and to point you to

other precedents that I think are more helpful in this particular circumstance.

The member for Thornhill has referred to a precedent set by Speaker Toth in respect to an issue raised by Opposition House Leader Mr. Yates in May 2010. I would argue that this is incredibly distinguishable from the facts of this case. In that case, we were talking about a minister who said that he had consulted formally on four different occasions on this very regulation with the privacy commissioner.

In fact, the Speaker found in that case, after looking at a letter that had been submitted by the privacy commissioner on the very circumstances that were in debate, that there were troubling questions and inconsistencies in that the proposed regulations the commissioner states in his letter he had been provided with were significantly different from those that were, in fact, the question of debate at this circumstance.

While the minister contended that he had consulted the privacy commissioner on four different occasions on regulations, the regulations were completely different from the ones at debate. Therefore, the Speaker did find a *prima facie* case of contempt in that particular circumstance.

1510

In this case, there has simply been a misunderstanding as to which process had been followed. I would direct you, Mr. Speaker, to previous decisions that you have given in this House, particularly on October 4 of this year, when you ruled on a point of order raised by Ms. MacLeod. I thank the honourable member for her point of order.

It is, again, another challenge for the Speaker to deal with the veracity of comments that have been made and that may be made in the cut and thrust of question period, but also for the Speaker to deal with the factual correctness of comments that do get made in this House.

I would just remind all members that they should endeavour that to the best of their ability and to the best of their knowledge they are ensuring the comments that are made in the House are factual. That is, in fact, what the minister has done in this particular circumstance.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would refer you to another statement that you made on October 6, 2010, when you stated, “I would remind all members in this regard that it is not for the Speaker to determine the veracity, the factuality or the correctness of any statements made. It is my role to ensure that all honourable members are taken at their word. If the honourable member takes exception to comments that were made, I would say to him that the ideal time for him to have taken exception to them was during the five-minute response that is allocated.”

In this particular case, Mr. Speaker, in a ruling that you made on September 28, 2009, you spoke of what was involved in determining contempt. You reviewed a decision by Speaker Carr, made in 2002, when Speaker Carr stated, “The threshold for finding a *prima facie* case of contempt against a member of the Legislature on the basis of deliberately misleading the House is therefore set

quite high and is very uncommon. It must involve a proved finding of an overt attempt to intentionally mislead the Legislature. In the absence of an admission from the member accused of the conduct, or of tangible confirmation of the conduct independently proved, a Speaker must assume that no honourable member would engage in such behaviour or that, at most, inconsistent statements were the result of inadvertence or honest mistake."

In this decision that you provided on September 28, 2009, you also reviewed Speaker Carr's review of the Profumo incident in 1963 in the UK, where there was clear evidence that the House had been misled and that Profumo had deliberately set out with the intention of doing so.

In your reasons, as well, you quoted David McGee in the Third Edition of Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand, which sets out the threshold, which is rather high. "There are three elements to be established when it is alleged that a member is in contempt by reason of a statement that the member has made: the statement must, in fact, have been misleading; it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time ... that it was incorrect; and, in making it, the member must have intended to mislead the House."

I would argue that in this particular case, none of these three thresholds have been met and that Minister Chan has taken the opportunity to correct the record.

In your decision on September 28, 2009, you again referred to David McGee and his Parliamentary Practice, specifically addressing ministerial replies to oral questions, where he states, "A deliberate attempt to mislead the House would be a contempt, and if a minister discovers that incorrect information has been given to the House, the minister is expected to correct the record as soon as possible. But subject to these circumstances, accuracy or otherwise is a matter that may be disputed and the Speaker is not the judge of it. It is a matter for political criticism of the minister concerned if members believe that a minister has answered incorrectly."

You go on to state, "It seems apparent, in the absence of any such corrections or retractions, that the Minister of Health," in the case in September 2009, "is of the view not only that he and the Premier had not made a misstatement, but also that they believed their statements in the House were accurate at the time they were made and that there is nothing to correct. Presumably this view is bolstered by the fact that by the time the House resumed earlier this month, additional information had become common knowledge."

In this case, again, I would repeat that the minister did correct the record this morning.

In your decision of September 2009, you stated, "The Speaker is therefore left without any clear evidence of a deliberate attempt to mislead the House and instead with what comes down to a disagreement between members on opposite sides of the House as to the facts.

"Since the circumstances that are the subject of this point of privilege fall short of establishing 'a proved

finding of an overt attempt to intentionally mislead' the House, I cannot find that a *prima facie* case of contempt has been established."

Here again I would argue that in the case of Minister Chan and the questions raised by the member for Thornhill there is no proved finding of an overt attempt to intentionally mislead and I would say that there is no *prima facie* case of contempt in this particular matter.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I would like to respectfully correct the statements just made by the government House leader, not on any of the particular precedents she cites but rather on the issue of whether or not Minister Chan did correct the record or did not correct the record.

If one consults Hansard from this morning, he rose on a point of order first thing in the morning, obviously forewarned that we were going to bring a point of privilege, and he did correct the record but he corrected it with regard to a contract, as I stated in my initial presentation, relating to the awarding of an auditing contract to Thornton and company, if memory serves. He did not correct the record and he has had ample chance to do so over the course of the past week in a late show, under repeated requests for a correction of the record, and he has yet to do so. I believe, as I said, that the minister is an honourable gentleman. However, since he has not corrected the record, it stands as a point of privilege on my part that this minister did, indeed, misrepresent. Whether that was an error of commission or omission, I can't say. All I know is that we, and therefore the people of Ontario, got misleading information. I leave it to your good judgment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to thank the member from Thornhill and the government House leader. I appreciate the information that has been brought to the attention of the Speaker. He will reserve his ruling.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHICKEN FARMERS OF ONTARIO

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to recognize the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, who are here today at Queen's Park. I want to thank them for coming to share their concerns and let us know the state of their industry. I hope all members will take the opportunity to meet with them or join them in the dining room later today.

As some of you may know, the egg farmers were here to visit us recently. So I guess we've settled the age-old question of which comes first, the chicken or the egg.

Ontario chicken farmers make a huge contribution to the province. They employ 5,000 people directly and thousands more indirectly through transportation and food services. Ontario families depend on our chicken farmers to produce high-quality, safe and healthy chicken, and they deliver. In fact, Ontario chicken farmers have

some of the highest standards in the world. There are nearly 1,100 chicken farmers in Ontario which combine to produce 330 million kilograms of chicken annually.

The Chicken Farmers of Ontario is a farmer-run, non-profit organization that has been in existence since 1965. The organization operates under a system known as supply management or orderly marketing. This system maintains a constant price and ensures that farmers make a living while consumers have a steady supply of chicken. On behalf of Tim Hudak and the PC caucus, I want to reiterate our support for this system.

I want to thank the chicken farmers once again for being here today. We will continue to work with them to make sure they can provide the same high-quality, widely available and affordable product for years to come.

FREDERICK HARRIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a very special statement to make today about an exceptional man. His name is Frederick Keith Harris. He was born on December 17, 1920, in Tichborne in Frontenac county. He was the second of four children of Effie and Frederick William Harris, and his brothers were John, Harold and Joe.

Mr. Harris moved to Sudbury to work in the mines. He got married to Cécile Ranger from Capreol 68 years ago, and they have five children: David, Darleen, Brian, Diane and my husband, Keith. They have 13 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

He worked for Inco for 35 years. He worked at most of the plants, including Frood, Kirkwood and Garson mines, as well as the Coniston smelter, as an industrial electrician and he has been retired since March 1977.

In 1955, he built a camp on Wahnapitae Lake. He told me he still remembers how bad the bugs were that spring. He spent his summers out at camp sharing his love of fishing and hunting with his boys, as well as being an excellent blueberry picker. In later years, he became a good curler and bowler.

He will be celebrating his 90th birthday, so I invite everyone who knows Keith, or uncle Chuck or Curly, to come and join us on December 18 from 1 to 4 at the Walford.

Happy 90th birthday and congratulations on passing your driver's licence test yesterday. I knew you could do it.

CHICKEN FARMERS OF ONTARIO

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to rise today to thank the Chicken Farmers of Ontario for coming to Queen's Park to host their annual Chicken Day.

Our chicken farmers play an important role in Ontario's agricultural sector. With more than 5,000 full-time jobs in Ontario, and thousands more in spin-off jobs, many Ontario residents depend on the chicken industry to earn their living, pay their mortgages and raise their families.

1520

I'm proud Ontario is home to some of the world's safest, most delicious and nutritious chicken. I'm proud

to support Ontario's chicken farmers. Nearly 40% of all the chicken farms in Canada are located right here in Ontario, making Ontario the largest producer, processor and consumer of chicken in the country. We also know that supply management plays an important role in that success; it brings stability to the industry, which is why our government is a strong, committed supporter of the system.

I want to commend the Chicken Farmers of Ontario as an organization for their hard work. The leadership and support they provide is helping Ontario's hard-working chicken farmers. They make a great contribution to our agri-food industry and to our economy.

The McGuinty government is proud to support and celebrate the wonderful achievements of the Chicken Farmers of Ontario and looks forward to their continued success.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm glad the Minister of Health and her parliamentary assistant are in the chamber and can hear this statement.

Wellington county resident Lucas Maciesza suffers from PNH, a rare blood disease. Despite repeated questions in this House and despite widespread media coverage, he's still waiting for assurance that, over the long term, this government will pay for Soliris, the medication he needs to save his life. The good news is that it's already working, after the London Health Sciences Centre stepped in to provide Soliris, pending the ministry's expedited review.

Still waiting for the government, the London hospital provided another dose yesterday, but this may not continue indefinitely. Last night, I spoke to Rick Maciesza, Lucas's father. Week to week, his family wonders whether Lucas will receive the medication he needs. Week to week, his family wonders whether he will live or die. It's totally and completely unacceptable that they should have to live like that. They need and deserve certainty.

I want to quote from Dave Meyer's recent editorial in the Wellington Advertiser: "We firmly salute the doctors who had the guts to start Lucas on Soliris, even if it is only for a short time."

His doctor, Ian Chin-Yee, writes that Lucas "will almost certainly benefit from Soliris, yet the question of funding remains as his family struggles, not knowing how they will bear the cost of this treatment." In fact, Dr. Chin-Yee wrote this long column, which was published in the Guelph Mercury just recently.

We need to know when this government will finally agree to provide long-term assurance that he will receive this essential medication. Let's give Lucas and his family the Christmas present that they deserve.

EVENTS IN OTTAWA CENTRE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Well, I think it's clear that Christmas is here. We can see all the festivities around us here

in this great Legislature and in our families and in our communities as well. It's a great opportunity for all of us to be one with our families, our friends and our neighbours, and to celebrate Christmas and the holiday season in its fullest glory.

I think we all know that not everybody in our community is as privileged as some of us may be. They may not have access to a warm home or a close family member, or just a simple roof over their head, and it's incumbent on us, every single member, along with our communities, to be involved and to make sure that those people will also be able to enjoy this great festive season.

I know that, like in many members' communities, in my community of Ottawa Centre there are some great organizations which every year host Christmas dinners and lunches to ensure that those who are deserving in our community have the same opportunities as well, and I want to highlight some of those organizations.

On December 11, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., the Salvation Army will be hosting their free, volunteer-run annual Christmas dinner at the Booth Centre at 171 George Street.

On December 19, the Ottawa Mission will host their Christmas dinner from 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the mission on Waller Street.

On December 25, on Christmas Day, the Shepherds of Good Hope will be hosting their holiday meal for seniors.

Knight Enterprises will host a Christmas dinner on Christmas Eve, through Chris Knight, who's a great philanthropist, at the Jack Purcell Community Centre.

The world-famous Newport Restaurant in Ottawa Centre and its owner, Moe Atallah, will be holding their Christmas dinner meal on December 25.

And the Carleton Tavern and the Hintonburg Economic Development Committee in Ottawa Centre, as well, will be hosting their Christmas party on December 25. Everyone is invited.

Those who do not have a home and all who want to volunteer, please come to these Christmas dinners.

To everyone, merry Christmas.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. David Orazietti: I rise in the House today to comment on a green energy project that is creating jobs while also diversifying the riding of Sault Ste. Marie.

Starwood Energy has announced the completion of financing for phase 2 of its \$150-million solar energy farm, which will be operational in the next year. Once built, the 50-megawatt Starwood solar farm will power as many as 20,000 homes during peak demand and will reduce emissions by an amount equal to taking 9,500 cars and light trucks off our roads.

In addition to helping clean up our environment, the Starwood project will create good-paying jobs in Sault Ste. Marie. Four hundred new jobs are created in engineering and construction, and 20 permanent jobs will be provided in ongoing management and operations for the community. The Starwood energy solar farm project

is just one recent example of how the Green Energy Act is helping create jobs and strengthen Sault Ste. Marie's economy.

There continues to be considerable success in our area with renewable energy. The Brookfield Renewable Power wind farm is a \$400-million project, one of the largest wind farms in Ontario, made up of 126 turbines that generate enough power for 40,000 homes.

Our cogeneration strategy efforts have resulted in a power purchase agreement with Essar Steel Algoma. It is a \$135-million investment in a 70-megawatt cogeneration facility that eliminates waste gases from the environment. As well, St. Marys Paper will be building a biomass cogeneration project with 400 construction jobs and 155 permanent jobs.

This is indeed great news for our riding of Sault Ste. Marie.

EVENTS IN LAMBTON-KENT-MIDDLESEX

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: We're only two and a half weeks from Christmas, but preparations have been under way for quite some time in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Santa parades are the harbinger of the holiday season. The honour of being the first parade in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex goes to the village of Poplar Hill, where the parade is the weekend before Remembrance Day. One week later, Santa made his appearance in Wallaceburg, where the weather was so warm this year that even Santa must have wanted to take his coat off.

Every weekend until Christmas is filled with opportunities to follow Santa around the riding. In Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, parade floats and participants move from small community to small community, from parade to parade. Last Saturday, you could start the morning with Santa in Watford, follow him to Walpole Island in the afternoon and to Lucan or Alvinston in the evening.

Parade themes abound, with the most novel theme being in Watford, where floats were bedecked with blue boxes and Christmas trees decorated with all sorts of recyclables, all competing for the best reuse, reduce and recycle float.

As small children watch with wondering eyes, the evening parades are abuzz with the hum of portable generators as every float is bejewelled with bright colours. These same floats take on a completely different appearance in the daytime at the next parade.

If you were in Lucan on Saturday, you would have been witness to the beginning of the record snowfall which, at the time, seemed to add a wonderful excitement to the event, but as it continued to fall so that we now have over 146 centimetres, some were left to say, "Be careful what you wish for."

I want to recognize the unsung heroes of every community and parade: the people who, year after year, organize, stage and direct the floats; the local dealerships who offer vehicles for the dignitaries; and the businesses and service clubs who work diligently to design and build

the floats that fascinate the children for whom all this is being done.

I want to thank my constituents and wish all of them a merry Christmas and continued blessings in 2011.

PERIMETER INSTITUTE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Almost a decade ago, Mike Lazaridis founded the Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in my community of Waterloo. Recently, BMO Financial Group, which has been serving Canadians since 1817, announced a \$4-million gift to the Perimeter Institute. I was very pleased to participate in this announcement.

The gift announced by BMO president and CEO Bill Downe is the largest corporate donation received by the Perimeter Institute in its 10-year history and the largest single donation to support science in BMO's history. It will establish the BMO Isaac Newton Chair in Theoretical Physics at Perimeter Institute, the first of five such positions to be named after scientists whose insights have defined modern physics: Isaac Newton, James Clerk Maxwell, Niels Bohr, Albert Einstein and Paul Dirac.

Perimeter Institute is already a global leader in basic research, and there is no question that these chairs will serve as a magnet for talent, bringing even more of the best theoretical physicists to Waterloo, creating a brain gain for Canada.

1530

I thank BMO for stepping up first and I hope it will encourage other private sector donors to come forward. I wish to join all members in thanking BMO for their commitment to accelerating research and innovation in Canada and for investing in our communities across Canada.

CREDIT VALLEY HOSPITAL

Mr. Charles Sousa: Mississauga is very fortunate to be served by two outstanding hospitals: Trillium Health Centre and the Credit Valley Hospital. They have an excellent reputation. Unfortunately, members of the opposition have been attacking the Credit Valley Hospital. These attacks are very upsetting to the patients and workers at the hospital as well as the community.

Recently, Mayor Hazel McCallion responded to the opposition's outrageous claims by writing to their leader. In that letter, she said:

"Mr. Hudak

"Last year, Credit Valley Hospital had one of the busiest emergency departments in the province....

"In this incredibly busy and challenging environment, Credit Valley Hospital is a provincial leader in reducing ER wait times....

"In April of this year, the Credit Valley Hospital was recognized for ... wait time improvements, and secured \$943,000 ... through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, in recognition for achievement within the pay-for-results initiative.

"Overall ... patient satisfaction results increased....

"I trust that you will use this information on a go-forward basis to support Credit Valley Hospital and I hope you will also consider publicly apologizing to the hard-working employees, physicians and volunteers at Credit Valley Hospital, who endeavour each and every day to provide outstanding care."

I hope that members of the opposition will take Mayor McCallion's words to heart. Stop attacking our Mississauga hospitals and start standing up for patients and health care workers.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'ASSOCIATION DES INGÉNIEURS DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Kwinter moved first reading of the following bill: Bill 148, An Act respecting the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers / Projet de loi 148, Loi concernant l'Association des ingénieurs de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: The bill will solidify the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers's position as an advocacy member service body for engineers in Ontario.

UKRAINIAN HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE JOUR DU PATRIMOINE UKRAINIEN

Mr. Martiniuk moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 149, An Act to proclaim Ukrainian Heritage Day / Projet de loi 149, Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine ukrainien.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'm honoured to introduce this bill on behalf of myself with the support of my colleague from Oshawa, Jerry Ouellette, and my co-sponsors: my friend of many years Donna Cansfield, member for Etobicoke Centre and a Canadian of Ukrainian descent, and Cheri DiNovo, member for the riding of Parkdale-High Park.

This bill would see September 7 in each year proclaimed as Ukrainian Heritage Day. The first official Ukrainian immigrants to Canada, Vasyl Eleniak and Ivan

Pylypiw, arrived in Ontario on September 7, 1891, on their way westward. Soon afterwards, Ukrainian immigrants began arriving in Ontario in larger numbers. Today, Ontario is home to more than 336,000 Ukrainian Canadians. There are over 1.2 million Canadians of Ukrainian descent across this country.

I thank Yvan Baker, president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, Ontario Provincial Council, and its members for their invaluable assistance in the drafting of this bill. On behalf of myself and co-sponsors, I urge all members to support this bill, which is the first of its kind in Canada, in any province, recognizing Ukrainian heritage.

PETITIONS

RAIL LINE EXPANSION

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Metrolinx, an agency of the government of Ontario, is planning an eightfold expansion in diesel rail traffic from 50 trains per day to over 400 trains per day in the Georgetown corridor, which cuts through the west-end neighbourhoods including Liberty Village, Parkdale, Roncesvalles, the Junction and Weston; and

"Whereas this expansion will make this the busiest diesel rail corridor on the planet; and...

"Whereas diesel exhaust poses an especially potent danger to children and the elderly...

"Therefore we, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge our leaders to act now to ensure that the rail expansion in the Georgetown south rail corridor, including the air-rail link, be electrified from the outset and that there be no further expenditure on diesel technology."

I agree with this petition. I'm going to sign it and give it to page Jennifer.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt.

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning, a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients" ... ; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, "insured PET scans" are being performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Kira to take it to the Clerk.

BRITISH HOME CHILDREN

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 British home children arrived in Canada from group homes and orphanages in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland; and

"Whereas the story of the British home children is one of challenge, determination and perseverance; and

"Whereas due to their remarkable courage, strength and perseverance, Canada's British home children endured and went on to lead healthy and productive lives and contributed immeasurably to the development of Ontario's economy and prosperity; and

"Whereas the government of Canada has proclaimed 2010 as the Year of the British Home Child and Canada Post will recognize it with a commemorative stamp;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Enact Bill 12, a private member's bill introduced by" the MPP from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry—"on March 23, 2010, an act to proclaim September 28 of each year as Ontario home child day."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are over 7,000 people with disabilities waiting for the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services' special services at home (SSAH) funding and almost 4,000 on wait-lists for Passport funding; and

"Whereas such programs are vital and essential to supporting Ontarians with developmental disabilities, and their families, to participate in community life;

"ARCH Disability Law Centre supported by Family Alliance Ontario, People First of Ontario, Community Living Ontario, Special Services at Home Provincial Coalition, Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario and the undersigned individuals and organizations urge the Ontario government to take quick action to substantially improve developmental services.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"—Ensure that all qualified Passport and SSAH applicants immediately receive adequate funding;

"—Make the application and funding allocation process transparent; and

“—Ensure that sufficient long-term funding is in place so that eligible Ontarians with disabilities can access the supports and services they need.”

I affix my signature to this petition in full support.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Brampton, Burlington and St. Thomas, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

“Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Elizabeth to bring it to the Clerk.

1540

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

“Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout.”

I shall sign this petition and send it to the clerks' table.

SOLAR ENERGY PROJECTS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It's a solar farm petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty's Liberal government is forcing Ontario municipalities”—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind—the member may not have been here. I remind all members that when presenting a petition, they can present excerpts from a petition, but the same rules that I made note of earlier, of using titles or riding names, apply to petitions. So even though a name may be in a petition, you have to make reference to, in this case, the Premier.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: “Whereas” Premier McGuinty’s “Liberal government is forcing Ontario municipalities to build solar-powered generation facilities without any local say or local approval; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government transferred decision-making power from elected municipal governments to unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats, who are accountable to no one; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government has removed any kind of appeal process for municipalities or for people living in close proximity to these projects; and

“Whereas Tim Hudak,” Garfield Dunlop “and the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party have committed to restoring local decision-making powers and to building renewable energy projects only in places where they are welcome, wanted and at prices Ontarians can afford;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the McGuinty government”—can I say that?—“restore local decision-making powers for renewable energy projects and immediately stop forcing new solar developments on municipalities that have not approved and whose citizens do not want them in their community.”

I'm happy to sign that and give it to Connor to present to the table.

HYDRO RATES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition consisting of 60 names from the community of Gogama. For those of you who don't know Gogama, this is 90% of the population. It's very short.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Be it resolved that” Premier McGuinty “immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST).”

I fully support this petition, thank the people of Gogama for sending it and will ask page Mahir to bring it to the Clerk.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario Historical Society, founded in 1888, is a not-for-profit corporation, incorporated by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario April 1, 1899, with a mandate to identify, protect, preserve and promote Ontario's history; and

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario's greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

"Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development."

I agree with this petition, shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

OAK RIDGES MORAINE

Mr. John O'Toole: I'll be very brief.

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine" in my riding of Durham; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the Oak Ridges moraine; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permit process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine."

I'm pleased to sign it, support it and present it to Joshua, my favourite page.

HYDRO RATES

Mme France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Capreol, Hanmer and Val Caron, and it reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that Premier McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST)."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page William to bring it to the Clerk.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Historical Society, founded in 1888, is a not-for-profit corporation, incorporated by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario April 1, 1899, with a mandate to identify, protect, preserve and promote Ontario's history; and

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas the Legislature failed to enact Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, which would have prohibited the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas the Cooley-Hatt Cemetery (circa 1786) is located in the Niagara Escarpment plan within Ontario's greenbelt plan in Ancaster, city of Hamilton; and

"Whereas this is one of the earliest surviving pioneer cemeteries in Ontario, with approximately 99 burials, including at least one veteran of the War of 1812;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario must take whatever action is necessary to prevent the desecration of any part of this sacred burial ground for real estate development."

I shall sign this and send it to the clerks' table.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Ted Arnott: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas there are over 7,000 people with disabilities waiting for the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services' special services at home (SSAH) funding and almost 4,000 on wait-lists for Passport funding; and

"Whereas such programs are vital and essential to supporting Ontarians with developmental disabilities, and their families, to participate in community life;

"ARCH Disability Law Centre supported by Family Alliance Ontario, People First of Ontario, Community Living Ontario, Special Services at Home Provincial Coalition, Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario and the undersigned individuals and organizations urge the Ontario government to take quick action to substantially improve developmental services."

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“—Ensure that all qualified Passport and SSAH applicants immediately receive adequate funding;

“—Make the application and funding allocation processes transparent; and

“—Ensure that sufficient long-term funding is in place so that eligible Ontarians with disabilities can access the supports and services they need.”

It's signed by a significant number of my constituents, and I've signed it as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to find a petition here and then read it. It reads as follows—as soon as I find it. Pardon me.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Simcoe North.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

“Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebro-spinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally practised procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis.”

I'm pleased to sign that on behalf of the hundreds and hundreds of names I have on this petition.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, I'm pleased to read a petition from the riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

“Whereas”—I'm sure I have it here.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Cambridge.

1550

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Cambridge Memorial Hospital and other hospitals in the Waterloo region are experiencing substantial increased demands due to population growth; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government's freeze on new long-term-care facilities has resulted in additional long-term-care patients in our hospitals; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government's cuts to hospital funding have resulted in a dangerous environment for patients and staff in Cambridge and across Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“(1) That the McGuinty government meet its obligations to introduce a population-needs-based funding formula for hospitals, as has been done in other Canadian provinces.”

I agree with this petition and affix my name thereto.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTH PROTECTION AND PROMOTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION ET LA PROMOTION DE LA SANTÉ

Ms. Matthews moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act / Projet de loi 141, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very pleased to address members at this second reading of our proposed amendments to the Health Protection and Promotion Act. I'll remind the House that we introduced this legislation late last month with one goal in mind: to better protect the health of our people and our communities during a public health emergency. To achieve that goal, we felt it was necessary to strengthen Ontario's response in the face of serious public health events, such as a pandemic. The next time a major health emergency comes around, and one will most certainly come around, we need the province to be better coordinated and better prepared.

Overall, the proposed amendments would strengthen the province's ability to plan, manage and respond to future pandemics; to provincial, national or international public health events; and/or to other emergencies that affect the health of Ontarians. “Why now?” you may ask. “Where is the urgency of implementing these proposed measures?” Well, let me tell you. In an increasingly globalized world, the movement of people, micro-organisms and products such as food and consumer goods can lead to health security concerns. Ontario is often the entry point to complex and wide-reaching connections all around the world that could potentially bring serious threats to public health right to our doorstep.

We found that out the hard way with both SARS in 2003 and then again with the H1N1 pandemic in 2009. The H1N1 pandemic is but the latest example of a significant public health threat affecting Ontario, but it will certainly not be the last. Thankfully, the H1N1 pandemic was not as severe as it could have been. Had it been more severe, we believe that our proposed measures would have added to the many important tools already in

place to respond even more effectively to a public health emergency.

I'm certain none of us will soon forget last year's H1N1 influenza pandemic. I know I certainly won't. It was the major news story for weeks and months across this province, this country and, indeed, the world. Here in Ontario, public health units across this vast province worked extraordinarily hard to implement the largest mass immunization program we've ever seen, and they did so under intense media and public scrutiny.

The logistics of organizing and delivering such a mass immunization campaign under tight time frames were highly complex and demanding. I'm very pleased to say that, in general, Ontario did very well in the face of that worldwide health emergency. Through the H1N1 pandemic there was unprecedented collaboration internationally, nationally, provincially and at the local level. Health experts shared fast-moving, evolving information on a novel virus and best practices to control its spread. There was also terrific collaboration at all levels on planning and delivering antivirals and vaccines, especially in our northern and remote areas. Furthermore, boards of education, teachers and public health staff worked well together to keep schools open. Our emergency departments stayed open and were able to handle the very high volumes of patients.

I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank our very dedicated medical officers of health, our countless health care providers and the volunteers who came to help for their responsiveness, for their collaboration and for their professionalism.

Along with all that good work, it became evident, however, that there was room for improvement. As in any crisis situation, we could have done better, so we need to take the lessons learned, and we need to act on them.

I want to reinforce that these amendments are not a criticism of the local response. Rather, I want to emphasize that this proposed legislation would provide greater support to local public health units and enable them to respond with even greater consistency. The changes that we're making today are about looking forward and planning ahead for the next public health emergency. Think of it as everyone in Ontario working under one big umbrella rather than 36 different umbrellas when the storm hits.

Last June, Dr. Arlene King, Ontario's chief medical officer of health, released her preliminary report on the province's H1N1 response. Dr. King's report identified what worked well during the H1N1 pandemic, as well as opportunities to strengthen the ministry's response in future public health emergencies.

The report made several recommendations. Among them was the need for a strong, centralized approach to pandemic response, the kind of response that the current legislation simply does not permit. Dr. King suggested that when faced with a serious health threat, the province's chief medical officer of health must have the authority to direct public health units in real time.

We are listening to that advice, and we're taking action by proposing to give the chief medical officer of

health the necessary strong central oversight during a public health emergency, and we're doing that through our proposal to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act, or HPPA. This is necessary because the legislation in force does not currently permit the CMOH to issue directives to medical officers of health and/or boards of health.

At this time, the CMOH has powers under HPPA to issue directives but only to health care providers or health care entities and only with respect to precautions and procedures; for example, wearing protective masks in certain settings. The CMOH also currently has the authority to assume any of the powers of a medical officer of health or board of health if the CMOH is of the opinion that it is necessary to avoid a health risk.

However, to address province-wide consistency and standardization, that could amount to exercising the powers of the boards of health of all 36 public health units, which would be neither practical nor reasonable, particularly in the time of an emergency. The proposed amendments, in contrast, would enable the CMOH to specifically direct boards of health and medical officers of health to respond to public health events in a standardized way. This would allow the CMOH to direct a co-ordinated response to a public health emergency in a way that Ontarians expect and in a way that Ontarians deserve, without unnecessarily managing the day-to-day operations of health units.

During last year's pandemic, local public health units led the response in their respective jurisdictions; that's how our public health system is organized in this province. This approach allowed communities to respond to local needs, taking into account the enormous variations across communities, an approach which is highly valued and encouraged.

However, without a consistent approach on critical aspects of the response, variations in response across the province and the perception of unequal access to pandemic services can result. Variability across the province can also create challenges for health organizations which serve residents in more than one public health unit. These health organizations have to tailor their programs and services in accordance with varying immunization strategies taken by different public health units, which can lead to a lack of clarity among staff, and most importantly, among the public.

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In a future pandemic or public health emergency, if our legislation is passed, the chief medical officer of health could issue directives to medical officers of health and/or boards of health relating, for instance, on elements of a mass immunization response to promote consistency and standardization across the province where it's appropriate to do so. Clear provincial directives regarding immunizing priority groups, for example, could help to minimize any potential confusion or perceptions of inequity in different parts of the province.

It's important to remember that the proposed directive-making powers are for use in very limited and

very specific circumstances, and for a limited period of time; that is, for example, in cases of infectious diseases, environmental health and public health emergency preparedness. Such directives could be enforced for six months, or less, if the chief medical officer of health so decided.

These measures are in no way intended to undermine a fundamental principle of public health in Ontario; that is, the ability of health units to customize programs and services in recognition of local needs. We very much value that feature of our public health system, and we want to preserve it. However, we believe that the right balance between provincial standardization and local flexibility is necessary in any public health response.

During significant public health events, it is especially important for public health to speak with one voice and act in concert across the province. Within those specified provincial parameters, local flexibility in implementing the response would be maintained and indeed encouraged. Our proposed legislation would provide greater support to local public health units and enable them to respond with greater consistency. For Ontarians, this means that no matter where they live in the province, they would be shielded and protected equally.

In addition to the new authority we propose to give the chief medical officer of health, the proposed amendments would also ensure that appointments of acting medical officers of health are approved by the chief medical officer of health and the minister. These amendments would also expand the minister's power to use publicly owned premises, on the advice of the chief medical officer of health, for public health purposes such as holding an immunization clinic.

Members should note that the CMOH engaged in a number of discussions with public health officials related to the proposed legislation. Dr. King spoke with medical officers of health, the executive of the Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health, and the executive of the Association of Local Public Health Agencies. Continued discussions with these stakeholders will take place to plan for future public health events. These discussions will also help inform the implementation of the proposed amendments, including the appropriate balance between provincial consistency and local flexibility in public health responses.

It may interest members to know that a number of other provinces and territories have provisions for CMOH and/or ministerial powers that permit the issuing of directives to local or regional authorities, and/or the possession of premises in a variety of different circumstances. It should be noted, however, that the organization of public health services in each Canadian province and territory is quite varied, with different reporting relationships between the provinces, CMOHs and local health authorities. In some Canadian jurisdictions, for instance, the local board of health members and/or medical officers of health are provincial employees. Ontario has one of the most decentralized public health systems in the country. While this decentralization

affords local health authorities flexibility to look after local needs, I want to emphasize that we need to balance that with provincial standardization, especially in times of public health emergencies.

The proposed legislation is part of this government's larger plan to enhance the way we respond to future public health events or emergencies. I wish to mention that this larger plan also includes a renewal of the Ontario health plan for an influenza pandemic. The OHIP is an evergreen document, meaning it is continually reviewed by Ontario health experts with a view to continuing improvement. There are certainly many lessons learned in last year's pandemic that will be seriously considered to enhance our provincial pandemic plan and improve our health system's operations for the next time a pandemic rolls around.

In addition, Ontario will continue to take steps toward implementing Panorama, a pan-Canadian initiative that will improve public health surveillance and enhance the province's capacity to deliver immunization programs. Once implemented in Ontario, Panorama will be a significant step forward for public health that will greatly improve our response in future health emergencies.

I'm very proud of this government's record of having a real commitment to public health in Ontario. We've more than tripled public health spending since we took office, and that helps make Ontario better prepared for events like H1N1 and others. With last year's pandemic, we were fortunate; it was not as severe as it might have been. As Dr. King noted in her report, hospitalizations, ICU admissions and death rates were lower in Ontario than the national rates. Immunization coverage was higher than most countries in the world. H1N1 deaths were fewer than annual deaths from seasonal flu. So, we got off relatively easily. But the next one could be worse.

This proposed legislation would add to the many important tools already in place, and enhance our response to public health threats. With this legislation expanding the authority of the chief medical officer of health, an enhancement of OHIP and the steps being taken toward implementing Panorama, our government is demonstrating our comprehensive response to the lessons learned during the H1N1 pandemic.

These coordinated steps are crucial in ensuring that Ontario's highly regarded public health system continues to promote and protect the health of Ontarians. I urge all members to consider supporting this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I commend the minister for making brief remarks on this small but important bill. But more importantly, I'm waiting for our critic, the member from Whitby-Oshawa, to make our position well understood as well, because public health and public safety is certainly something our leader, Tim Hudak, has spoken to us being very important that we stand firmly, making sure we can deliver what we promise. So I listened carefully.

I think last year's evidence was clear that we had lots of vaccine and problems with distribution logistics and

other things. But I think Dr. King's report probably was the genesis of this bill, and I guess your response to it is focusing a bit more control in your office and in the medical officer of health's office, which is important for the coordination you referred to.

Certainly, in these risky times, with communicable diseases and that, we need to have a plan. It's better to have a plan than to be late planning, which on this late day in this round of four years we are having a discussion about. It is important, and we would probably be supporting it. But I'm waiting for the input from our critic, Christine Elliott, to make sure that we put firmly on the record some of our concerns and some of our recommendations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I was really glad to have an opportunity to hear the Minister of Health explain to us basically some of the parts of Bill 141: what will change, what will stay the same, who gets what power and why. I would agree with the previous speaker that it sounds like the genesis of this bill really came from Dr. King's June 2010 report on the H1N1 pandemic last fall.

What I would like to have seen as well is that the Minister of Health is conducting her own review. I will quote from Dr. King: "As mentioned at the beginning of this report, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is currently conducting a detailed review of its response to the pandemic. When this is released, the findings of the review will paint a much clearer picture of Ontario's H1N1 response than anyone has seen to date. I would urge those interested in a complete and technically detailed examination of what happened in this province during the pandemic to read it."

To this day, we have not seen or heard of this report.

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We are now presenting a bill that clearly comes from some of the shortcomings that we experienced last fall and that Dr. King has documented for us, but the full picture has not been painted yet, or if it has, it has not been shared. I would respectfully ask that this report be shared with everybody so we really understand what is bringing Bill 141 forward and what are some of the shortcomings that we are trying to fix with this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's certainly a pleasure to rise in support of Bill 141, the amendment to the Health Protection and Promotion Act.

As a former medical officer of health, I think I have probably a fairly unique perspective on this issue in this chamber, and I can tell you that if I was still the medical officer of health for York region, I would be supporting this bill. There is no question in my mind that the primary responsibility of all medical officers of health, in particular the chief medical officer of health, is to look out for the public interest, the best interests of our constituents—of our community, in the case of medical officers of health.

This bill does a lot in the public interest. It is certainly in the public interest to have a clear direction province-wide, to have consistency in terms of the approach taken when there is a public health emergency in the province. As our local medical officer of health, I enjoyed certain independence in terms of delivery locally, and I think in many cases that is a useful thing, that medical officers of health can tailor programs to the local needs of their community. But in the case of a public health emergency, certainly the most important thing is to ensure the safety and health of the public, and this amendment goes a long way in that direction.

In particular, it addresses something that I think will be of great assistance to medical officers of health, wherein the chief medical officer of health can obtain premises to hold a flu clinic. This is something that was an issue during last year's pandemic and it goes directly to assist local medical officers of health.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Minister of Health, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I look forward to the debate on this legislation in the House. I want to say thank you to the member from Durham, the member from Nickel Belt, and the member from Oak Ridges-Markham, who, as she said, has a very unique perspective on this legislation. I think she is the only former medical officer of health sitting in the Legislature today, maybe ever having sat here; I'm not sure about that, but she may very well be the first.

This legislation actually brings our laws in line with what the people of Ontario probably already thought we had. At the time of the H1N1 pandemic, I think people were surprised that we didn't have the authority to actually issue directives around who the priority groups were in terms of getting immunized; that we did not have the authority to actually ensure that immunization clinics could be set up.

This is legislation that I think is very important as we prepare for the next event. Of course, we do not know what that event will be, but when it does come our response as a province will be stronger if we actually pass this legislation. What it means is that people across the province will have consistent access to care, will have consistent messaging. Our media now covers far more area than our public health units do, so it's important that when there is a message to be delivered, we can deliver that message to all people across those rather artificial boundaries that create our public health units.

This is important legislation. It protects people. It will eliminate a great deal of the confusion that can surround a response to a public health emergency, and I'm hopeful that members of the Legislature will, in fact, see the value in it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to comment on Bill 141, Health Protection and Promotion Amendment Act, 2010. With your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I would like to share my time with the member from Durham.

These amendments to the Health Protection and Promotion Act are aimed at strengthening our public health system in advance of the next pandemic, because we do know that it is a question of when, and not if, in the world in which we live now.

Since the early 1970s, we have seen the emergence of more than 30 previously unknown diseases associated with bacteria or viruses that have wreaked havoc on health care systems. These include Ebola from 1977; legionnaires' disease, also 1977; hepatitis C, 1989; variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, 1996; and H5N1 influenza A, or avian flu, in 1997, just to name a few. H1N1, of course, is the most recent example of an international pandemic.

I would like to say at the outset that I do call this piece of legislation an important first step. We will be supporting this legislation, but it is only one piece of the overall public health picture that I think we need to be increasingly aware of as time goes on.

With the introduction of the Health Protection and Promotion Amendment Act, we've seen from the ministry's websites, from different things that we've seen in the media, what the ministry advises and highlights is the commitment to the implementation of Panorama, which, of course, is the pan-Canadian solution that will allow us to track who has been immunized. This has been in development since the SARS epidemic some years ago. We've heard the ministry talk about the benefits of Panorama and their commitment to seeing it being implemented, but there isn't a word about Panorama in Bill 141, and I think that needs to be noted. I'll be speaking about that a little bit later on in my comments this afternoon.

With respect to the legislation itself, Bill 141 does largely echo many of the recommendations made by Ontario's chief medical officer of health, Dr. Arlene King, with respect to Ontario's response to the H1N1 pandemic of 2009. Dr. King's thoughtful report, which was entitled *The H1N1 Pandemic—How Ontario Fared*, noted that overall Ontario fared well compared to the rest of the world, and I did note the Minister of Health's comments on that, but the fact remains that we do need to make some changes to our public health system in order to be even better prepared for the next pandemic. I think it is true to say that we got off relatively easily with respect to this pandemic. However, a number of people died, and we need to examine what we did and our response to see whether we could have done some things better. And I think it's fair to say that we could have.

I would just like to take a brief quote from Dr. King's report that I think, certainly, highlights the need to deal with these issues. She stated that:

"We live in a truly interconnected world, and with that interconnectedness comes vulnerability to literally any disease that emerges anywhere in the world. Because of air travel, a disease can take less than a day to travel around the globe under the right, or wrong, circumstances. A recent study, for example, found Toronto to be one of the most vulnerable cities in the world in that

regard because of our high volume of air travel to and from a great number of different locations.

"Simply put, we know beyond a shadow of doubt that at some point, there will either be another pandemic, or another emerging infectious disease event like SARS, that will require a provincial response. We intend that response to be as robust and effective as it can be."

Dr. King's report noted several aspects of Ontario's response to H1N1 that went right, and I think that we should take some time to comment on that. We do note, first of all, that all of our public health officials did an amazing job under very, very difficult and strained circumstances, and worked above and beyond. We owe a huge debt of thanks to Dr. Arlene King, to all of the medical officers of health and to all the health professionals across the province. That was spectacular.

The other thing that went right was the state of emergency preparedness overall. The province's Critical Care Secretariat worked with 124 hospitals to implement a coordinated surge capacity management plan, which helped to manage increased demand in critical care units.

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Secondly, sufficient quantities of antivirals were ordered. As part of its health plan for an influenza pandemic, Ontario made it a priority to have enough antivirals on hand to treat 25% of all Ontarians, while the national strategy only requires that supplies be available to treat 17.5% of the population. So we were ready with respect to that.

Similarly, with respect to vaccines, Ontario received its first shipment by October 20, and immunization began on October 26. A national strategy for the administration of the vaccine, to which all federal, provincial and territorial partners agreed, set out the following priority groups who would be given first access to the vaccine: pregnant women, children between the ages of six months to five years, people living in remote and isolated communities, people under 65 with chronic conditions, health care workers, household contacts and care providers of infants less than six months of age, and people who are immuno-compromised.

Now, all that was good. It was at the delivery stage of the vaccine that problems began to happen, and those are the issues that the chief medical officer of health's report primarily deals with, and that Bill 141, of course, which takes over from the chief medical officer's report, also deals with. Dr. King's report notes that the picture presented repeatedly by the media of people lining up for hours to get themselves and their children immunized was a disturbing one. It hinted at possible widespread panic and a system not ready to cope. Neither of those things, as it turned out, was true, but there is no question that the H1N1 immunization process could have been better handled.

Delivery of the H1N1 vaccine did not go nearly as well as it should have. Public health officials and members of the public were constantly confused over the rollout of the vaccine, who was in the priority groups and where to get the vaccine. We even experienced confusion

over who had been vaccinated from the loss of vaccination lists to people being double-dosed due to a lack of an ability to follow who had and who had not been vaccinated.

Confusion began even before the outbreak. In the face of concerns of an autumn H1N1 surge, public health officials across the country began to rethink pandemic and seasonal flu vaccination plans. Initially the plan was to administer the seasonal flu vaccination to Ontarians, followed by the vaccination rollout for H1N1. The fear was that the wave might peak before H1N1 vaccine could be delivered or that vaccine would arrive too late to make a difference in the course of the outbreak.

The next wave of confusion and miscommunication came with the actual rollout of the immunization plan. We will all recall the news stories in the first weeks of the vaccine becoming available in Ontario, when pregnant women, the elderly and those at risk stood in the cold and rain for hours. Sometimes patients would get the shots after some hours of waiting; sometimes clinics would be shut down after only a few hours, due to being overwhelmed with demand, running out of vaccine or a variety of other reasons.

The variance from region to region was astounding. I know that vaccination clinics were open in my riding days before the vaccination clinics opened in Toronto, even to those in high-risk groups. This, of course, led to a series of problems surrounding region jumping, where Torontonians were travelling out to the suburbs so that they too could receive the shot at the earliest convenience. This, in turn, overwhelmed many of the GTA 905 region clinics, which were now trying to inoculate not only their own residents but the residents of Toronto and surrounding areas as well.

Next came the confusion over who actually belonged to the high-risk groups. We had some regions in Ontario, for example, where pregnant women were being told in one town that they were considered to be in a high-risk group and were eligible for early vaccination and others who were told they were not a priority. Another issue with pregnant women later emerged regarding the adjuvanted versus the unadjuvanted vaccine. Initially, pregnant women who were determined to be at high risk received the adjuvanted vaccine. After a week or two of this being administered, it was decided that pregnant women would receive the unadjuvanted vaccine after all. It was later announced, again by the World Health Organization, that the adjuvanted vaccine is in fact safe for expectant mothers. This decision was followed by the realization that prioritized pregnant women who hadn't already received the adjuvanted vaccine would have to wait now for the unadjuvanted vaccine, which was behind schedule in its delivery. On and on the confusion went.

Then there was the issue of the distribution of the vaccine. Unlike the seasonal flu vaccine, the H1N1 vaccine was initially only being distributed in flu clinics. This caused a lot of confusion through the general public, many of whom were used to being vaccinated at their

family doctor's office. This, along with the inconvenient early hours of operation of the immunization clinics, caused a lot of confusion.

Finally, on October 31, 2009, Ontario announced that it would distribute the vaccine to family doctors, but only those who met the criteria and requested it.

Dr. King summarizes the situation as follows: "This was the largest and most rapidly executed immunization program in Ontario's history. We underestimated the logistics of organizing and delivering a mass campaign in extraordinarily tight time frames, across a vast province, in the glare of intense media coverage and in the face of rising demand. We underestimated lineups and demand surges. We had different plans unfolding in different communities, with the result being a different level of service depending on where you were in the province. We didn't fully leverage the primary care physicians who traditionally deliver the seasonal shot. And in too many critical ways, we didn't have the details we needed about how the immunization program was unfolding."

"That last point is critical. In an era where there is much talk about electronic health systems and patient records, we do not have in this province the capacity to electronically manage and track our immunization programs." Those are the words of the chief medical officer of health, not mine.

There are two important points here that we need to highlight. One is the importance of having a functioning system of electronic health records to track and manage immunization programs.

It's amazing to me how often the need for electronic health records is noted in every aspect of our health care system, yet the McGuinty government continues to mismanage this file dismally. Despite the expenditure of over \$1 billion, we do not have an eHealth system, nor, at this point, even a hope of one. In this case, the chief medical officer of health has highlighted the need for such a system, yet Bill 141 does nothing to improve this situation.

The bill does, however, change the chain of command in times of emergency to eliminate confusion and to ensure a consistent response to emergencies across the province. It allows the chief medical officer of health to direct public health units in real time as he or she sees fit. This additional power can only be used if there exists or if there is an immediate risk of a pandemic; a provincial, national or international public health event; or an emergency with health impacts anywhere in Ontario, and if the policies or measures are necessary to support a coordinated response or to otherwise protect the health of persons.

The Health Protection and Promotion Act is also being amended to allow the Minister of Health to take over the possession of public premises on the advice of the chief medical officer of health where the premises are needed for public health purposes; where there is an immediate risk of an outbreak of a communicable disease anywhere in Ontario; or where there exists, or may exist, an immediate risk to the health of persons anywhere in

Ontario. This is an important provision in cases of emergency to allow the minister to designate a place where clinics can be held, where the public can be immediately alerted and directed to, to deliver this coordinated response.

Finally, section 69 of the act is amended to provide that a board of health may not appoint an acting medical officer of health without the approval of the chief medical officer of health and the minister, except where the appointment would be for a period of less than six months.

We currently have 36 public health units across this province, and nine of them have acting medical officers of health. Currently, under the HPPA, or Health Protection and Promotion Act, a board of health can appoint physicians as acting medical officers of health, but there are no further educational qualifications attached to these appointments, no provincial mechanism required and no time limit on the length of the appointment.

This amendment is aimed at strengthening the public health system by attaching conditions to these appointments, and we certainly support that.

In conclusion, the changes being proposed to the HPPA are, on their face, quite reasonable. We look forward to committee hearings on this bill to ensure that the changes are considered reasonable by the many people and organizations involved in our public health system. We need to do whatever we can now to ensure the safety of the public in advance of the next pandemic, and certainly whatever can be done in order to ensure public health in the coming years. The Progressive Conservative Party and caucus are certainly proud to support that.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to listen to the very thorough review of our critic the member from Whitby-Oshawa, Ms. Elliott. I believe we should all be working together, as she suggested. More importantly, I think she made a lot of references to the work by the existing medical officer of health and commended all the people who work in public health, especially in these high-risk circumstances.

I feel rather vulnerable; I probably know less than anyone in this room, less than the next probable speakers. I would say the member from Oak Ridges-Markham has declared that she is a former medical officer of health from York region, I believe, and I have a lot of respect and time for what she has to say, so I'm certainly going to listen up there, too. I hope she's able to break free of the notes and comment directly and specifically on what steps she would recommend. Often here, we're kind of geared to the government's message, certainly when you're on the government side. I hope she's able to release herself, set herself free and say some things that are quite germane to the improvement of the delivery of health care generally.

Also, I am waiting anxiously to listen to the member from Nickel Belt, whom I've heard. She's the NDP critic

on health. I have a lot of time for her time. She's also worked at a very high level in health delivery in communities. I'm not sure she's a nurse, but she certainly seems to know a lot about health care, as her predecessor, Shelley Martel, did.

Anyway, that being said, this bill is clear right from the outset that it's pretty much mirroring—I've just finished reading the notes that I've been given, and the bill. Most importantly, it's made up of two or three different sections that aren't really in themselves anything more than an organizational structure, technically, in response to Dr. King's report, as has been mentioned.

I just recently had my staff person look that up and get me some information on the contents of how Ontario fared. I think the summary offered by the member from Whitby-Oshawa is quite accurate. I say there was a fair amount of confusion, and some of it was, who was in charge? It comes back to the very first point she made: The Panorama plan for Canada is really what's important, because if you move up the food chain here on the pandemic level and the globalization implications, where it gets very complicated, who's in charge? In fact, I worry about the United Nations becoming the purveyor of all the information and coordinator, and then all the languages, all the cultural variances and all of the taboos that cross all those lines, and it getting confused because of the high-risk groups, maybe women—and women may not have that high of a particular importance in some societies. It can get almost politicized to the point where it becomes incomplete, compromised.

In the last go-round, two of them that I'm reasonably aware of—SARS, when we in fact were government—I might be wrong here, but I think the person who came forward the most—there was some confusion about who was in charge provincially at that time. Certainly, there was the chief medical officer of health. Even today, what they're able to do is being clarified in this role here.

There are 36 medical officers of health in our province, but often some of them are temporary, because maybe they don't pay that well or you're in a community where it's remote or hard to service, and it's difficult to attract or recruit qualified medical officers of health to some of those areas.

Again, going globally, I remember the work done by the World Health Organization. If I move even just to Canada, there was Dr. Butler-Jones, who is the chief public health officer for Canada. Then there was another person who basically had another role, who was the head of the immunization part of it. The infectious disease control people had a particular role in this thing.

First of all—and more important—is organization. The second part is where Canada should support Ontario; respectfully, it should take the lead in trying to make the Canadian plan comprehensive across the provinces and the territories. I think that's pretty important.

The next thing that's needed is the information system and protocols within the communication. The point was brought up by our critic, Christine Elliott. This may sound critical, and it's not political. It's to the importance

of the eHealth system. I can tell you that I was parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health for, I think, about three years, and I was on the board then called Smart Systems for Health. Prior to that, there was a federal initiative—this is where it becomes quite confusing; the politics even in Canada. Canada Health Infoway is the gateway, the system, the architecture for communicating health records, but then you get these different freedom of information officers who start to intervene and interpret who can see what.

It bogs right down. Imagine, as I say, if this was run by the United Nations. Who can see what? Here's the issue. If someone is in a high-risk group—there are about six high-risk groups: pregnant women, children over five, people in remote areas, chronic disease people, health care workers themselves, of course, and immune-compromised individuals. Some countries may not have the same priorities in all those things, and if it's run at the highest level, where's the autonomy of the nation, without all the wrangling between the provinces?

The health record is on system. Who can see it? Can a nurse see it? Can a doctor see it? Can a person who's the front-end piece of an immunization clinic see your health record, which may show you have had diseases that perhaps are personal.

I'm telling you: Look at this system, and it isn't as simple as it seems. There needs to be strong, effective, trusted leadership to come up with a system that's going to satisfy the First Nations in Canada, the Inuit and their predisposition or preconceived discomfort that maybe immunization is foreign to their way of dealing with health.

So when I look at these words in the three sections, one is the power of the minister or the chief medical officer of health to appoint permanent persons within the 36 districts or whatever number of medical officer of health districts there would be. There are some very large areas in Ontario. These are unorganized territories, mostly in northern Ontario, where it would be very difficult to have the means of instantly getting out electronic information on immunization records: who's had it, who hasn't, who's on the preferred list, where to report, whether you should get the adjuvanted dose. I remember all that on adjuvanted: who should get it, which doses are where. They had too much of some and not enough of the other.

Imagine if this was a world pandemic and there was a shortage. The last one was kind of an unfortunate situation, but we were fortunate, and I think that's what the report from the medical officer said. Basically, Dr. King's overall assessment was that indeed we were ready. However, she did note, "Had the pandemic been of a significantly more severe nature, we might not have been as ready." If you're ready, you're ready, or you're partially ready. That means you're not ready. I'd say, put it down as you were just plain lucky.

That's not what you want in a public health delivery system. Quite honestly, I think there are many roles and many players in this whole discussion. Some would even

say there's potential for a fair amount of, dare I say it—I remember that the only producer, if you recall, on the money side of this; always follow the money, Mr. Speaker. You would know that. You worked in that industry for a while.

Here's the issue. Do you recall there was only one producer of the antiviral, and it was priceless? Imagine their stock. I wouldn't have minded having their stock. So, there's that part: scarcity of resources, and usually price goes up. That's one part.

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The other part is, how much do you order? How many doses or refresher doses are required for young persons and for older persons? How much does it compromise the already natural immune system that individuals may carry? What about the rights of the individuals themselves to say, "I don't want to partake in this"?

Here you've got the United Nations—and we saw what happened in the G8 and the G20: People were roughed up; their rights were ignored. Even the auditor said it in his report—where is that report? Maybe I took it up to my office because I have to take it home to read this weekend. Yeah, that's the report there; I was looking at it. It says, Caught in the Act. That's the report that's talking about the G20 thing. The reason I'm saying that is, these things—the rights of the individuals should be paramount. I really firmly believe that. I want to make that statement.

Then you get into this—how do you stop the spread? Can you isolate people who don't take it?

When it says in the regulatory provisions, none of which are spelled out here—you'd need to have some confidence in the people running the business, making sure that their rights are being respected, whether it's on cultural or religious grounds or other preferences.

I also say that I was looking at the organizational structure for the infectious disease and emergency preparedness branch. This is the Ministry of Health. It's Leona Aglukkaq, who is the federal minister.

Here's the organizational chart: The chief public health officer is David Butler-Jones, as I said. Then there's the infectious disease and emergency preparedness branch, which is Dr. Danielle Grondin. Then there's the centre for emergency preparedness and response, Dr. Theresa Tam. Then there's the centre for communicable diseases and infection control, with Dr. Howard Njoo. There's the centre for immunization and respiratory infectious diseases, with Dr. John Spika. Then there's the policy integration, planning, reporting—Dr. John Spika has that responsibility as well. Then there's the centre for food-borne, environmental and zoonotic infectious diseases, Mark Raizenne. Then there's the laboratory for food-borne zoonoses, which is Mohamed Karmali. Then there's the national microbiology laboratory, and the chief scientist there is Frank Plummer.

We saw most of those people on the CBC fairly regularly, all being reasonably excited about the pandemic. Every time I watched the United Nations, and the United Nations person's name was—just a minute here; I

have it here somewhere. Anyway, her name is not that important, but she kept appearing. Every week, they kind of upped the tension on the pandemic, which caused, as our member from Whitby-Oshawa said—and then the delivery mechanisms weren't exactly reliable, like whether there was enough in the right labs and things.

No one wants—but when we had SARS, we know that people lost their lives, and there was a lot of blame spread around. We were lucky, as Dr. King said, last year with the H1N1.

Dr. Sheela Basrur, I believe, was the medical officer of health, and she became the most active spokesperson on media on that whole SARS outbreak. I respect—she was passionate and effective in her communications. She was eventually appointed as medical officer of health and, unfortunately, died in that role. She was highly regarded by all sides of the House and was highly praised for the work and the profile she brought to it, that I think was important. It was kind of accidental in the whole scheme of things, but it's really important to make sure we all listen to these roles.

Then, of course, I would think Dr. King would want to see, as our critic, Mrs. Elliott, said—the Panorama plan for Canada is where we should be aimed. We need to support clearly in this legislation and in this Legislature itself, in word and action—even perhaps by amendments saying that we would be subordinate to the national plan, encouraging other provinces that are less resourced with the talent that we have to work toward that plan, ultimately.

I do believe that much of the literature today on the economy, much of the literature today of trade or of the monetary system, is global. I would say the bird is out of the nest. It's global. Everything you do, everything you eat and everything you even wear or every box you open came from somewhere else. That's the reality.

When we talk about these things in that context, this whole thing becomes even more important, even though it's just a small piece of how terrorism operates. Do you understand? Even that would become part of the plan here, so in terms of the overall concern I have, this is a pretty small piece of work, to be honest. Respectfully, it's one and a half pages.

The reason I'm trying to make sure that much of what I'm saying should be on the record—and the member on the other side has been given to speak rather recklessly lately—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Willowdale, yes. He's trying to encourage me to stop. Now, what does he not want said? That's really a more appropriate question.

I'm looking at this plan here, as I always go back to the fundamentals of the discussion, and this is a plan that we support. It's part of a larger plan and a larger challenge that need to fit clearly into a national plan. What it does—it really doesn't do much of that. In fact, it's not even mentioned in here.

The other part that's mentioned is some mandatory provisions here, which is sort of downloading because,

really, there's insufficient funding for the medical officer of health. I'm sure that the member from Oak Ridges-Markham will say that. It says that the medical officer of health is to issue directives “to any board of health or medical officer of health requiring the adoption or implementation of certain policies or measures if there exists or there is an immediate risk of a provincial, national or international public health event, a pandemic or an emergency with health impacts in Ontario and the policies or measures are necessary to support a coordinated response or otherwise protect the health of persons.”

It goes on in a bit more detail but that's part 2. The first part was that the minister can permanently appoint a medical officer health in one of the 36 regions. The second part doesn't really mandate too much organization, unfortunately, which is very important. Also, “The act is amended to provide for the further definition of specific terms in the regulations and to provide for prescribing the matters for which the chief medical officer of health may make directives under clause 77.9(2)(d).”

I'm saying it really doesn't do in any specific way very much. All of the words that I've put on the record are to respect the fact that we consider it very important. I don't want to get too far out on a limb here, but we were kind of blamed for SARS, really. I think it was completely unfounded. In fact there were people who died during H1N1 last year. I'm not blaming anyone, and I don't think the medical officer of health did. But what I'm saying here is that there really isn't a plan. It's admitted there isn't. There was a lot of confusion during the implementation. We were lucky, even the report says that. I had a few questions that I felt should be on the record to address the globalization issue, who's in control, the cultural issues, and “How did Ontario fare?” is a fair question.

But I do look back with some history at the bubonic plague, Ebola, the hep C epidemic, SARS, H5N1 and H1N1. There's no question that these things will become more grave and more difficult because of the resistance to certain treatments. We are reducing our natural immunization or immunity systems by all the times we take more and more things to prevent things. We're reducing our own natural ability to be immune to things. I'm completely convinced of that. We do grow up, and I think there was an article in the paper the other day that said the more you're exposed when you're young to certain things, the more resistance you have when you're older, and I think there's some truth to that.

I want to thank the people who work in health care, and I really do mean that. I have a couple of sisters who are nurses. I know just how drawn to their profession, in a professional way, they are, how they rise to the challenge, how many of them even expose themselves to great dangers. Some passed away during the SARS thing offering service to their community and to their fellow man. That's the context that I'm thinking of, and the cynicism that can arise once big government, the big brother of society, starts telling us what to do—there

must be certain clarity about it, and we, as legislators, owe that to the people. So I would expect there would be more hearings, an education forum for people to understand the risks and the solutions that are being presented.

1650

I could speak longer if I was asked, but it appears that some people would prefer I didn't. So with that, I'll give up the floor for our side and compliment again our critic, the member from Whitby-Oshawa.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was most interesting to listen to the member from Whitby-Oshawa, as well as the member from Durham. They went through all of the on-again, off-again information that was circulated last year during the H1N1 pandemic, and gave us real-life examples in their riding as to how some vaccination clinics were going while others hadn't even opened up; how some priority populations didn't have access, while people off the priority list had access; how an adjuvanted vaccine was recommended, then not recommended and then recommended again; how a double dose was recommended for kids, and then not recommended; how they were on the priority list and then they were not; and how this created the huge mess that we saw last year. They gave examples of what happened in their ridings.

I will have tattooed in my brain for the rest of my life that horrible, horrible day in Sudbury. The weather was just awful, between rain and snow and sleet and hail and wind, and this lineup of pregnant women and young families pushing strollers, standing in the cold to get their vaccine, finally making it inside the mall and inside the vaccination centre only to be told that they had run out of vaccine. This was completely despicable, completely hard to comprehend, but it happened. It happened right here in Ontario.

We have to learn from this. We have to learn the lesson of the past so we can do better in the future. If this bill is a step forward to help us do better, certainly let's go down this path, because where we've been before was not pretty.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I am pleased to be able to respond to the remarks by the member from Whitby-Oshawa and the member for Durham. I'm very pleased to hear that the official opposition will be supporting Bill 141, because I think this is work that everyone in this place can agree on, that we need to follow up on the recommendations from Dr. King, the chief medical officer of health.

Thank you to both members, because they really summarized some of the things that went smoothly. But some of the challenges that we ran into during H1N1—and I think it's particularly important to note that when it came to matters of availability of the vaccine, when it came to setting high-priority groups and which group was to get what vaccine, because there was coordination at the federal level, the supply each week was managed by the federal Ministry of Health, and the different

directives on who should be getting what and in which order were actually also directives that were being co-ordinated across the country.

There were a number of remarks about the Panorama system, and I want to touch on that quite briefly. Panorama is the public health system that is being developed. It is being developed jointly by all the provinces and by the federal government. The responsibility for the development actually rests with all the provinces, not simply with Ontario, because there is a recognition that we need to coordinate the availability of data during a pandemic, during an epidemic, because we know that those things cross provincial boundaries, so that the Panorama effort is progressing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): No. You spoke on it, right?

The member for Whitby-Oshawa, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I would like to thank all of the members who commented on my comments this afternoon: my colleagues the member from Durham, the member from Nickel Belt and the member from Guelph.

I am looking forward to the discussion on this issue. I look forward to the full comments by the member from Nickel Belt. I hope that the member from Oak Ridges-Markham will be commenting again, because as a former medical officer of health, she does have a unique perspective.

I think it is important to note that what we are looking at is setting up a more hierarchical chain of command in the event of a public health crisis. This is going to be necessarily changing the way that people have operated traditionally. Change can ruffle feathers sometimes and can cause people to not want to give up powers and abilities that they have traditionally had, but I think the remarks that were made by the member from Oak Ridges-Markham were very encouraging—that this is something that most medical officers of health would certainly be happy to do if it's going to contain a public health crisis and an outbreak of another pandemic.

I do look forward to this matter going into committee at some point, when we return to this place, and to hearing from the other people who will be affected by this. I think we do need to pay particular attention to our public health situation and make sure that we are ready for the next pandemic, because we all know that we were quite fortunate with respect to the H1N1 outbreak. We might not be so fortunate the next time around, so anything that we can do to strengthen our public health system we should be doing. I look forward to committee and hearing from the many stakeholders involved in this.

As a final note, again I would like to thank Dr. Arlene King and her staff, and all the dedicated health professionals in the province who managed during this difficult time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It will be my pleasure to add my voice to the second reading of Bill 141, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act.

I'd like to bring us back to 2003, when the SARS pandemic shocked the confidence of Ontarians in the health care system. We were not ready; we were not ready at all when SARS came here. Lots of people got sick, and many of them died. Health care workers got the disease from their patients, and some of them died. Our borders got closed. Nobody could come in and out. Our tourism industry pretty much collapsed. You could walk down the big hotels in Toronto, you could walk down the convention centres, and they all sat empty. It was a horrific blow to the local economy, certainly the tourist economy. Ask the hotel industry, the convention industry, the taxi industry: They all remember 2003. They all remember SARS.

It affected all of us. People could not shake hands in church anymore. I still have tickets for a concert by Elton John and Billy Joel that never took place because our borders were closed and they were not allowed in.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I hope they paid you back.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The member asked if they paid me back. Yes, they did pay me back, like they paid back the tens of thousands of people who had bought tickets.

But the fact remains that it completely turned our lives upside down. We got a taste, although on a small scale. People who got affected, people who lost loved ones and got sick wouldn't say that it was a small scale, but in the grand scheme of things, we got a taste of what a pandemic would look like.

We all remember Dr. Sheela Basrur as being the voice of reason, the one trying to make sense of all of this mess, the one telling us that we were going to get through this and we were going to learn.

1700

Well, SARS did live its course. Our borders reopened and tourists started trickling in. I also remember SARS Fest, where hundreds of thousands of people gathered to celebrate the reopening of Toronto. Toronto was open for business and tourists again; SARS was finally over.

But after SARS, many reports were written. Dozens of recommendations were issued to make things better. One such recommendation that the member from Oshawa–Whitby mentioned was that we should have a medical officer of health in each of our 36 health units. Well, it's now seven years later. In 2003, out of 36 health units, 12 of them did not have a permanent full-time medical officer of health. Fast forward seven years later, to today: nine of them, a full quarter, don't have a full-time permanent medical officer of health.

How could it be that something that brought this great city of ours to its knees did not motivate people to make the changes that we all know needed to be made so that we would be ready for the next time? Because we all know there will be a next time. Yet the recommendation—and nobody disagreed with the recommendation—sat there, and we went from 13 chief medical officer of health positions that were not filled by full-time permanent

doctors to nine. That's still way too many. We were supposed to be at zero. We were supposed to have a full complement of 36 medical officers of health way back in 2004. We're in 2010, about to welcome 2011, and things have not improved.

Why is it that when it comes to public health, the will for change, the will to do better, is never there? Public health is never looked at. It is not fancy, it doesn't grab a headline, and it doesn't use any sophisticated pieces of equipment. It is there to protect the public health. It is there to protect you and me, but we never give it the importance it deserves.

So six years later, we are left asking many of the same questions we asked ourselves after SARS. How could there have been such poor coordination? How could our public health system have fallen so short? Why was the communication plan such a disaster? There's no other way to describe it. If you go and talk to any one of the regional newspapers, they will tell you that on a daily basis they were getting at least three different pieces of information that did not jibe with one another, coming from three different areas. They took their role seriously in trying to inform the public as to how they could protect themselves from H1N1, who was on the priority list, what you were supposed to do and not do and all of this, but the information that was fed out to the regional media, and the central media for all matters, was a complete disaster. The papers didn't know who to believe, didn't know what to print, didn't know what to say. They tried their best to get information from their local public health unit, to look at the information from the chief medical officer of health, to put all that together and try to make sense out of it, when truly some of the information given was completely contrary to other information. One day they would say that pregnant women need the adjuvanted vaccine; the next day the other paper would say, "No, no, they don't," and then, seven days later, they did again. It's hard to make sense out of all that.

It's no surprise that the take-up on the vaccine was the lowest that the province had seen. Any other flu season, we hit over a third of the population, sometimes half, depending on who goes and gets the vaccination. With H1N1, with everything that was going on, we hit a quarter of the population. Not a great success now, was it? Our only saving grace was that H1N1 was a rather mild flu. People got sick all right, but they got better on their own. Thank God for that, otherwise what was a disaster on the communication side could have been a disaster in lives paid.

Today, Ontarians are not sure why so many of the problems occur. Why was there inconsistent advice? Why was there queue-jumping by the wealthy? We can all remember the hockey players getting in front of the line. Some of the children attending expensive boarding schools got ahead of the line. It seems like the basic values of our health care system, that people should get the health they need based on their needs, not on their ability to pay—this is a fundamental value of Canadian

society, of Ontarians. I would say we all share this. We all believe that people should get health care based on their needs, not on their ability to pay. All of this got thrown out the window. People were afraid of H1N1. Let the hockey player who's got lots of money get to the front of the line. Let the rich kids of the rich families get to the front of line.

What is this? It really showed that we were not prepared, it really showed that we were not ready, and yet Toronto should have learned. Toronto was the one that had gone through SARS. Toronto is the one that had made the recommendations and that knew we could do better six years before that. But the recommendations, I guess, stayed there and collected dust, because we certainly did not see them in action when it came time for H1N1. Lots of families were scared, and they didn't know who to turn to.

I must say that myself and the NDP welcomed the report by the chief medical officer of health, Dr. King. Her report raised some deeply concerning questions and issues, and also shed light on some of the pieces where we did pretty good. Dr. King made specific recommendations, one of which is included in Bill 141, and we will be moving forward with it. However, there are many other troubling pieces and issues that are raised in Dr. King's report or raised by other experts, and none of them are being dealt with.

It has been over a year since H1N1. It has been close to six months since Dr. King made her report public, and we are moving on but one of her recommendations. That's it; that's all. The rest of them are being ignored. How can we say, on one hand, that this is important and that we have to move forward, and on the other, we're only going to act on one of the recommendations? The rest of them, well, will they take care of themselves? I don't think so.

Perhaps the greatest concern is that after what happened after H1N1, both right and wrong, because Dr. King's report shows us what we did right as much as what we did wrong, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has never really acknowledged Dr. King's report. The quote I want to mention is that in Dr. King's 2010 report, she mentioned, "As mentioned at the beginning of this report, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is currently conducting a detailed review of its response to the pandemic. When this is released, the findings of the review will paint a much clearer picture of Ontario's H1N1 response than anyone has seen to date. I would urge those interested in a complete and technically detailed examination of what happened in this province during the pandemic to read" the report.

Well, it looks like the government is moving forward. It doesn't only look that way; the government has moved forward and has tabled Bill 141 in response to what Dr. King has said. But Dr. King admits that the complete picture will only come once the full report has been tabled and shared. Wouldn't it have been a little bit more prudent to wait for the full report to be shared, so that we

could learn from our mistakes and move forward with a piece of legislation that is inclusive of all our mistakes and all the recommendations, not just the one?

1710

As a member of the opposition, I was never given any information about the review. The draft report was confidential, and it would seem that not even the public health partners were consulted. The final report is nowhere to be seen, except I must say that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care walked across the aisle this afternoon and spoke to me privately, saying that I will hear from it soon. I'm certainly looking forward to seeing this report, but I would feel a whole lot more confident if I had the whole picture in front of me before I was asked to support and move forward with a piece of legislation that is basically the result of what happened with H1N1. Why don't we get the full picture before we move ahead?

I look at this as a process issue. You will remember that the accountability act was a little bit like this. The Auditor General tabled his report on the use of consultants by hospitals in a few LHINs, and the same day—actually, that morning—the minister brought forward a bill. As we started to work through the bill, we realized that this had been rushed through and unintended consequences of the bill had not been taken into account and we didn't have the time to correct them. I want to do this right. There is too much in the balance. A pandemic that is not handled properly, and for which the virus is serious, could mean thousands of deaths in Ontario. We need to do this right.

In order to do this right, we need to have the full picture of what happened with H1N1. We've had the full picture of SARS. The reports are there. They are well written. The recommendations are there, and we've seen very little movement. We will soon have the full picture of what happened during H1N1. Why don't we let the hard work of those people who did the review guide us?

I am no pandemic expert. Except for Dr. Jaczek, I don't think any of us are. But we are asked to make a judgment on a piece of legislation that has to do with how we handled the H1N1 pandemic. I would like to have an opportunity to read the report of the experts that speaks directly to this before we move ahead. I sure hope I will have a chance to do this so that we don't make the same mistakes and realize after it's passed that it has negative consequences that we had not planned for, or like in the case of the narcotics safety bill, that it leaves out entire areas of the province.

The narcotics bill, you will remember, does not cover people in First Nations and people living in rural and remote Ontario, where prescribing and dispensing of narcotics is not the typical physician, nurse practitioner or dentist prescribing, and you go to a pharmacist who dispenses and get your drugs. The bill works wonderfully well for that scenario, but I happen to represent people for whom that scenario does not work. We have alternate methods of getting drugs, because we live in remote, rural or northern Ontario or in First Nations.

We already know that when you rush things through, you make mistakes. I want to see the report. H1N1

should have been a five-alarm bell for all of us. We'd better do things right.

In May, the Toronto medical officer of health released a report on how Toronto Public Health fared during H1N1. The director of communicable diseases said, "The public health unit was stymied by changing directives from the provincial health ministry." In fact, their report goes on to make numerous recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I will read a few of them, because I think they are very pertinent. The first one: The medical officer of health of Toronto Public Health—which, by the way, is a huge public health unit when you look at the millions of people who depend on that medical officer of health—goes on to say, recommendation 1, "The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care:

"(a) should update the Ontario health pandemic and influenza plan (OHPIP) by specifying the pandemic roles and responsibilities of the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (OAHPP) and the local health integration networks (LHINs)." Yet in our bill we don't even mention the local health integration networks, although we all know that last fall they did play a role, and they will probably be called upon to play a role again. We're putting forward a piece of legislation that is supposed to correct those loopholes, but they have been left out.

They also said, "Designate LHINs as the lead agency for planning and implementation of flu assessment centres (FACs), including the identification of criteria for opening and closing FACs, in partnership with local public health units and primary care providers, including community health centres as key partners for ensuring that the needs of vulnerable populations are met."

If you were ever interested in putting an equity lens on this bill, you will realize that although vulnerable populations—and the key element that makes a population vulnerable is poverty. We all know that poverty is the biggest determinant of health. That population is at risk of being more sick, more often, more severely and being hospitalized for a longer period of time. Yet if you put an equity lens on Bill 141, equity was not part of the topic, although the Toronto Public Health unit clearly states that you have to look at key partners for the needs of vulnerable populations. It's not part of this bill. I would ask you, why not?

Other recommendations made by the Toronto health unit: "Mandate the province-wide use of real-time surveillance systems for timely monitoring of local influenza-like illness (ILI) activity." We don't see any of that in the bill.

They go on to say, "Ensure that Ontario Government Pharmaceutical and Medical Supply Services (OGPMSS) remains the coordinating agency responsible for processing and pre-approving community-based influenza vaccine orders for Toronto during an influenza pandemic."

Those are serious recommendations. This is a health unit responsible for the protection of the lives and health

of millions of Ontarians, that has gone through the process of looking at what went wrong, what were the tools, what were the processes that didn't work with H1N1 last year. They put forward recommendations for change, but none of those are being taken into account right now, and that worries me.

They also want to direct the chief medical officer of health, that's Dr. King, to lead planning and coordination of communication with the primary care sector regarding pandemic influenza. Remember how angry physicians were that their vulnerable patients were coming to them and they did not have access to the vaccine? They knew that the people standing in front of them in their waiting room, calling their office, needed access. They were part of the priority population, yet they were completely shut out. They were not allowed to give vaccines. What kind of a rollout is that? Everybody has known for years that when flu season comes, you can go to the health unit, but you can also go to your primary care provider and they give you your flu shot. Everybody in Ontario knew this, yet we refused to use that system. For reasons of urgency—we were trying our best with H1N1 last year, and the results were not really good. So they're making recommendations here, but I don't find those in Bill 141. None of those have been included.

1720

They also suggested that we review the effectiveness of different methods of planning influenza vaccine delivery, as demonstrated in the H1N1 pandemic, and include criteria for decision-making in that plan. It would be nice if that would be acted upon, I think.

Those are well-thought-out recommendations. They are doable. They don't cost any money, so it's not like we can use this recession as, "Well, we can't move forward. We haven't got the money." Those recommendations don't cost anything; they just ask us to do things differently, to give different powers to different people so that next time the next pandemic comes, we are ready. But we have Bill 141, a teeny-weeny little affair of a bill that doesn't touch on any of those.

As a member of the opposition who's going to have to work on that bill, how can I know if the minister has made any progress on any of these recommendations? If she has, how come they're not included in the bill? Have they looked into the important issues raised by Toronto Public Health and the other 35 health units that are all putting out their lessons learned from H1N1? When I contacted the one that I have a relationship with, they said that, no, they had not been contacted, their input had not been sought, that this comprehensive report from the government was news to them and they didn't know anything about it.

Those are the people who were on the front lines. Those are the people who took it on the chin when it didn't work out. Those are the people who are best suited to learn from what happened and make recommendations for change. They were there. They lived it. Some of them worked 20-hour shifts for days on end, yet we don't go and ask for their feedback? We don't take into account

their experience, what they've learned and what they would like to see changed? Is the minister certain that the bill before us today represents the careful assessment and thought that came from a thorough examination of the H1N1 pandemic in Ontario? I wish somebody would answer that question. I would feel a whole lot better if they did.

Also, a concern about the process of the government review of H1N1: They haven't been willing to examine questionable practices that occurred during the pandemic. Remember? I can still remember. I was there when the Minister of Health was scrummed in the hallway just outside of here when we first learned about queue-jumping, where the wealthy in Ontario, people with money—not necessarily people with the highest need, but people with the thickest wallets—were able to access H1N1 immunizations just because they could afford to pay their way to the front of the line.

When the minister heard of this, she, like everybody else in this House, was outraged. This is not the way our system should work. Our system should prioritize the people whose health needs are the highest. They are the ones who should go to the front of the line, not the people with the thickest wallets. But here it was on the front page of the paper for everybody to see: If you had money, you could weasel yourself to the front of the line.

The minister said—and I was there—in front of all the cameras, and it's printed in the paper, that she was going to look into it. She didn't think that this was right. She wanted to know what had happened. Did she look into it? If she did, she certainly didn't share it with me or anybody else in this House. If we are to learn from our mistakes, if we want to make sure that at the next pandemic, the hockey players don't get at the front of the line while the pregnant women wait outside in the rain, then we have to correct a few things here. No offence to hockey players, but when you're not on the priority list, you should not be at the front of the line. Pregnant women were on the priority list, but they were not at the front of the line.

Nothing has come of this. We've never heard back. We don't know if this was done. We don't know how come it happened. We haven't shed a light on any of this. We certainly haven't learned and cannot tell the people of Ontario, "It will never happen again, because this is how they weaseled their way to the front of the line. We have cut off that supply. It's never going to happen again." None of this was done.

In the next pandemic, what will keep the rich from finding their way to the front of the line like they did the last time? I don't know. I guess it was okay that those troubling events happened, because we're not willing to look into them, we're not willing to learn from our mistakes and we're not willing to tell the people of Ontario, "We've looked into it. It was not right and it won't happen again."

The NDP filed freedom of access to information requests because we wanted to know, has the work been done? How did that happen? We were told that those documents will not be released. What's that supposed to

mean? Is it because it was never actually done? Is this because it was done but they found that it's okay for rich people to go to the front of the line? We have no idea. They have decided that the documents will not be released. I'm not happy with that answer. I want more transparency. I want us to learn from our mistakes. I want us to do better. We owe it to everybody in Ontario to do better, but I get answers like this.

If the government is trying to fix the system, is secrecy and denial the right way to fix our system? Is this the right approach: secrecy and denial? I don't think so. I think we owe it to the people of Ontario, who basically judged us, whether we wanted them to or not—and you can go out on the street anywhere in this province and ask, "How do you figure the H1N1 pandemic went last year?" There won't be too many compliments coming forward. There will be stories of waiting in the rain; stories of waiting a long time to be told they had run out. There will be stories of not knowing who to believe, but there won't be too many compliments.

Now we want to fix this. We want to do better. The government has put Bill 141 forward, but a lot of the information that would allow us to turn the page, that would allow us to bring accountability, has not been released, and even through freedom of access of information, we're being told that it will not be released.

At first glance, the idea that the chief medical officer of health should have the ability to direct public health units in real time during a pandemic seems to make a lot of sense. It seems like a reasonable idea to me. But the details on how this will work and what that will mean for every community in Ontario remains to be seen. This work has to be thought through. This work has to be done so that we are certain that by taking away local flexibility we will end up with something better, because this is what you're doing. If we pass Bill 141 the way it is written now, the chief medical officer of health will be able to direct the public health boards and will be able to direct the medical officers of health. Up to now they had the freedom to answer to the local needs of the population they serve. We're about to pass a bill that will take away that freedom; that will centralize power.

This morning, we spent an awful lot of time talking about the G20 and how the centralization of power did not work out that well—and certainly was not welcomed by the people of Toronto or Ontario. It was a disgrace on all of us. So here we are, about to pass a bill—not to say that the chief medical officer of health would ever behave in the way that we saw—that is centralizing power during a certain health event. Let's think that through. Let's think through what that will mean for every community in Ontario so that we're sure that we do good.

The foundation of our public health system right now, of our 36 public health units, is reliant on local control. The local board of health must have the autonomy to plan and execute public health initiatives that work in their own community.

1730

I can tell you that the Sudbury and district public health unit, headed by Dr. Penny Sutcliffe, knows the

needs of the region way better than anybody in Toronto does. She knows how to reach people, how to communicate with them. Now, under certain circumstances, we're going to take that power away from her, a woman, a doctor that I respect tremendously, and shift it to another woman that I respect tremendously but who is further away from the action, further away from the people of Nickel Belt. It needs to be thought through. We need to make sure we're doing the right thing.

So how does Bill 141 change this? How is this going to lead to better planning and coordination of a pandemic? Show me how this will work so that I can better understand.

On July 15, the Association of Local Public Health Agencies—that's the association of public health units—wrote to Dr. King. They were concerned about her recommendation for more central control of local boards of health. Those are the people on the ground. Those are the people who live and work in our communities, and they are concerned.

The letter states: "We believe that increasing 'command and control' in such a system is unnecessary and may have the unintended consequence of aggravating the very problem that the report suggests it is meant to solve. Our experience"—and those are the people on the ground—"during the H1N1 response, for example, was that centralized attempts to standardize the rollout of the H1N1 vaccine program by imposing inflexible rules about priority populations were in fact themselves responsible for some of the inconsistencies and resulting public confusion that you identify in your report."

Those are pretty significant concerns. We are talking about an association of 36 public health units which, last year at this time, were up to their eyeballs in H1N1, trying to roll out and do the impossible, and they are concerned. They have severe concern about what we're about to do, plus they tell me that they have not been consulted. Shouldn't we, under the precautionary principle, take the time to hear from those people? Shouldn't we take the time to learn from their mistakes? We don't have to do all of the mistakes ourselves. We can learn from the ones we've done in the past and not repeat them.

Although I must say that we are not privy—I am not privy—to any subsequent consultation and conversation between Dr. King and what is called ALPHA, it is obvious that the issue raised in this letter needs to be addressed. Does the government have a response to those valid concerns? If they do, they have not shared it with me. I do share the concerns, but I don't know what the answers to those concerns could be.

If the provincial review of the H1N1 response would provide answers, why is this legislation being tabled before the full report has been shared and we've had time to read and understand the recommendations in it? It seems to be a bit backward—more than a bit, actually.

Dr. King talked extensively in her report about the impact of not having an electronic health record, an electronic patient record system: in Ontario there is no

way of knowing who gets the vaccine and no way to share this information system-wide.

Panorama, which I think every party has talked about, has been in development for over six years, but to this day, it is still not operational. Why? I have a few suggestions for why. Does eHealth mean anything to anybody? Does \$1 billion invested, with very little in return, mean anything to anybody? We haven't done stellarly on electronic health records; we have not done well.

When will Ontarians have a fully functional electronic health record?

Interjections.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm being heckled right now, saying that millions of Ontarians have a health record. They have a health record that does not talk to the health unit. If you send somebody for a test that is done by a health unit, the health unit will mail you your result or fax it. A poor secretary out there will have to scan it and put it into your health record, and there is absolutely nothing you can do with that report but read it online. Might as well read it in the paper chart; it would make no difference. The beauty of electronic health records is that you can share things; you can trend things; you can do things. None of this is available for the millions of people that have electronic health records in Ontario. I guarantee you, health units cannot send their results online. So we have part of an electronic health record for part of the population of Ontario. The problem is that to gain the benefits of a health record, all of the pieces need to work. Some of the pieces have started to work some of the time for some of the people, but that's not how you get the benefits out of it. We are still in the build-up stage.

The fact is that as long as our health care and public health system remain without the necessary electronic health record, we will remain permanently thwarted by this absence.

I realize that the time is running on the clock. The pandemic last year was a wake-up call; SARS was a wake-up call. Public health is something that I truly believe in. It could make a world of difference if we were to take it seriously. If we were to act upon the recommendations of the people who work within that system, we would have a completely different health status in this province. We would show drastic decreases in rates of cancer, in rates of Alzheimer's disease, other brain health diseases. We could make a world of difference, but public health always takes a back seat.

Finally, we have a bill in front of us that talks about public health. I hope that we will take the time to make the changes to that bill so that it really reflects all of the changes that need to happen so that when the next pandemic comes at our door, we will do better. Ontarians deserve nothing else.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Pat Hoy: First of all, I want to take the opportunity to wish everyone in Chatham-Kent-Essex a very merry Christmas, and I hope everyone has a healthy, safe and joyous new year. To little Trent, I want to tell him

that Santa Claus has the magic key to his house and there will be no problem on Christmas Eve, because I know you're concerned that you don't have a chimney, but Santa will get there.

Now, to the matter at hand, Bill 141, the Health Protection and Promotion Amendment Act, 2010: This is an important initiative on behalf of our Minister of Health, and flows in part from the pandemic we had, commonly known as H1N1. The proposed amendments would ensure that appointments of acting medical officers of health are approved by the chief medical officer of health and the minister, which I think makes good sense. There would be directives that could be in force for six months or less if the chief medical officer of health so decided, and would be limited to very specific matters, for example, infectious diseases, environmental health and public health emergency preparedness.

These directives most assuredly would give guidance to those that are going to have to perhaps make important decisions into the future. There are those who think that those possibilities are strong, and there are those persons who think that's absolutely going to happen in a modern world where diseases cross borders because of the way we travel now and the way the world is so small in terms of shipment of items and the moving of people, for example.

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I certainly look forward to continued debate on this matter.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I do appreciate the comments that were made by the member from Nickel Belt who I know was very involved in following the H1N1 pandemic and who saw the confusion that we all witnessed with respect to the lineups, who was going to be receiving the vaccine and in what order. I did note from her comments that she has been speaking to some of the front-line health professionals since the H1N1 situation, and she noted some of her discussions with them.

I was really disappointed to hear that they haven't been consulted with, despite the minister's comments—all the more reason why we were commenting on the need to make sure that this gets a full hearing in committee, that we need to make sure that we hear from the people who were on the front lines. It's well and good for all of us here to talk about it, but we didn't have that experience.

We need to hear from them about what went well, what didn't go so well and, more importantly, what their response is to this specific piece of legislation which is, for those watching, Bill 141, the Health Protection and Promotion Amendment Act, because this does delineate a very different kind of chain of command in an emergency situation. There are limits to when that can be used. It needs to be used primarily in an emergency situation. It has to be necessary.

We need to really examine whether those changes are absolutely necessary, whether there are reasonable limita-

tions on the local medical officer of health's powers, whether they should be restrained more, whether they should be loosened.

We look forward to hearing from the experts on the front line. Again, I appreciate the fact that the member from Nickel Belt brought that important point forward, as well as a number of issues relating to queue jumping and other issues that we shouldn't have to deal with in our public health system. We need to make sure it's accessible for everyone, and especially in cases of emergency that people who need attention get attention first.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bob Delaney: We've talked a little bit about what happens in a pandemic, and we've talked a lot about some of the local impact of that, and I'd like to describe something that we're trying to do in the city of Mississauga with just such an idea in mind as the measures proposed in this bill.

I've read petitions down through the months about an ambulatory surgery centre in the city of Mississauga. Now, should a pandemic or a serious illness strike almost any hospital, one of the first things to be cancelled is often elective surgery. If there's a procedure that a patient may have been waiting in line for upwards of weeks, months and, in some cases, maybe even a year, depending upon the severity of the condition and what form of treatment the patient is having with their doctor, and just at the very moment you're expecting the operation, through no fault of yours, no fault of the doctors, no fault of the hospitals, if they have to lock it down because of a serious infection or an outbreak of a virus, your surgery may be cancelled.

That's one of the reasons that at the Credit Valley Hospital we're proposing an ambulatory surgery centre which, should the hospital have to take the measures such as are proposed in this bill to secure the health and the safety of other patients and the hospital facility itself, means that if you've got your surgery booked, you'll still be able to have your surgery done.

What impact is this? Well, a generation ago, if you went into hospital for most types of surgeries, the odds were four out of five you'd be staying overnight. Today, the odds are reversed. About 80% of surgery is day surgery, and it's surgery that you walk in and walk out of, and that's a really good argument for not merely passing the bill but for doing a project like an ambulatory surgery centre.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted to stand up and comment on the speech of the member from Nickel Belt. I know she's an expert in the health field, but I was shocked that she would speak negatively about this bill. I don't know why.

The Minister of Health and the team of this government are trying to do their best to face any possible pandemic that happens in the province of Ontario. They create all the effort, put all the teams together, create a

special mechanism to tackle those issues if they happen in the future. That's what we're trying do: give the chief medical officer the support and the ability, if something happens, to act fast and quickly, in a professional manner, to put all the teams across the province of Ontario together to act in the same professional way.

We know we learned from our experience. You mentioned the flu we had last year in Ontario, and before, in 2003, we had SARS. Do you know what? We were probably not equipped to deal with it in a quick and professional manner. That's why the Minister of Health came in with a proposal to create a mechanism, a flexible mechanism, for the chief medical officer of Ontario to have the ability to conduct and also to command all the medical health units across Ontario to act in a professional manner, in the same way, to tackle any possible issues facing the province of Ontario.

You're right, that's why we have this place open on a regular basis: to debate many different issues. Your speech and the opposition's speech and ideas will enhance our ability to come up with better and stronger bills to be able to serve the people of Ontario. That's why we're bringing the bill to this particular place: in order to be debated, in order to be discussed on a regular basis, to have the best possible way to enhance our ability to serve the people of Ontario, especially in terms of health, because health is very important for all of us in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Nickel Belt, you have up to two minutes to respond.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I will start with a response to the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex. He talked about the part of the bill that limits the appointment of an active acting medical officer of health to six months. I think this is a step in the right direction. We've known since SARS that one of the key success factors for quality public health is to have permanent, full-time medical officers of health in all 36 health units. This doesn't bring us there, but it brings us towards there by limiting to six months. Right now, some of those medical officers of health have been "acting" for years. It will certainly, I would say, light a big fire under somebody's behind to try to get them to change this with a bill that says, "No more than six months."

From the member from Whitby-Oshawa, I certainly agree with her that we need to have full hearings on this. When you go out to the field and you hear from people who were up to here in H1N1 last year that they knew nothing about the bill coming, that they knew nothing about the ministry doing a review, this is very scary. Those are the people who know, those are the foot soldiers on the ground. The local medical officers of health on the ground need to be included. We need to take their concerns into account.

From the member from Mississauga-Streetsville, I fail to see the relationship between an ambulatory surgery centre and a pandemic. They would be one of the first

things that would be closed down, in my book, to use them as a flu centre, but that's beside the point.

The member from London-Fanshawe, I appreciate that they will be listening to the opposition.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 120, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010 / Projet de loi 120, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite et la Loi de 2010 modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite.

Bill 122, An Act to increase the financial accountability of organizations in the broader public sector / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à accroître la responsabilisation financière des organismes du secteur parapublic.

Bill 135, An Act respecting financial and Budget measures and other matters / Projet de loi 135, Loi concernant les mesures financières et budgétaires et d'autres questions.

Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ticket Speculation Act / Projet de loi 172, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le trafic des billets de spectacle.

Bill Pr37, An Act respecting The Sisters of St. Joseph of the Diocese of Peterborough, in Ontario.

Bill Pr38, An Act respecting Big Bay Resort Association.

Bill Pr41, An Act to revive Tonum Ltd.

HEALTH PROTECTION AND PROMOTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2010 LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION ET LA PROMOTION DE LA SANTÉ

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to be able to add to the comments that were made earlier by the Honourable Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, to this, the second reading of our proposed amendments to the Health Protection and Promotion Act.

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What this proposed legislation is about is reinforcing an already robust and highly effective public health system in Ontario. The amendments that we're putting forward are about consistency and looking forward to the next public health emergency. Sooner or later, there will

be another public health emergency, so we have to be prepared.

Public health certainly took on a leadership role in managing the difficult H1N1 challenge. Let me remind you that this was the world's first pandemic since 1968. Our government was tremendously impressed by, and grateful for, the dedication and hard work shown by everyone in public health and in the health care sector across the province.

All Ontarians depend on the work of public health not only during times of crisis but each and every day. So many aspects of public health and well-being depend on the daily work of public health units in areas like childhood immunization, food inspection, health promotion, to name just a few of the areas that public health units are responsible for.

When a health crisis strikes, that's when public health units really shine. They pull out all the stops to rush in to do what's necessary to protect the public's health. We saw that time and again during last year's H1N1 pandemic.

For example, because children were at high risk of complications from pandemic H1N1, public health units worked closely with daycare centres, schools and school boards to educate teachers, early childhood educators, students and parents in order to protect children and keep schools open. They carefully monitored school absenteeism and were prepared to close schools, if necessary. I'm pleased to say that no schools had to close during the response—a measure that would have been highly disruptive, both for parents and children. This is in stark contrast to some other jurisdictions, such as Mexico and the United States, which did implement school closures as a means of containing the H1N1 epidemic.

Communities also did their part to stop the spread of infection. One northern community set up a call centre where people living anywhere in the region could call in to book an immunization appointment at a site in their own community, so they wouldn't have to drive long distances to get the immunization.

Other communities used social networking technologies to inform the public about wait times at immunization clinics or used wristband technology to limit the time the public spent in lineups. Still other jurisdictions formed innovative partnerships, such as working with staff from public health and local Ontario Early Years centres, to support the immunization of children.

In First Nations communities, the effectiveness of the response was especially critical, given that some First Nations people were at high risk of becoming seriously ill from H1N1. There was tremendously strong collaboration among various partners, including First Nations organizations, federal, provincial and local organizations, and a close working relationship between public health units and communities. All these efforts at various levels resulted in Ontario doing very well, on the whole, in the face of pandemic H1N1.

As a government, we recognize the importance of our continued investments in public health because what

public health does is so essential for the lives of all Ontarians.

I want to be clear: The proposed amendments are not meant as a criticism of Ontario's public health response to the H1N1 pandemic. On the contrary, Ontario's public health system performed admirably during the H1N1 pandemic. However, the proposed measures would add to the many important tools public health units and the province already have in place to respond effectively to a public health threat.

The minister, when she was speaking earlier, outlined in detail the proposed expansion of the chief medical officer of health's powers to issue orders and to have a coordinated response in the case of a health emergency, so that we have a coordinated response all across Ontario.

I'd like to turn to two of the remaining elements of the legislation: the appointment of acting medical officers of health and the taking over of public spaces for public health use.

With respect to the taking over of public spaces for public health use, let me note that the proposed amendment refers only to public premises whose owner is already part of the broader public sector. The definition of "broader public sector" is taken from the Financial Administration Act and includes, among others, schools, colleges, universities, entities that are health service providers and municipalities. That gives you an idea of the locations in which you could have premises being taken over.

Currently, the minister may take over premises to use as a temporary isolation facility, a very narrow use. Of course, that resulted from SARS, when the conversation was about how we would isolate people who already had the disease. As we've learned from H1N1, we now understand that what we need to do with these facilities is broader than that. For example, we might want to take over a facility to use as a mass immunization centre. So the ability to take over something for public health uses is still, though, fairly narrow under the act. The minister would have to have in writing advice from the chief medical officer of health, who "is of the opinion that,

"(a) there exists, or there is an immediate risk of, an outbreak of a communicable disease anywhere in Ontario, or there exists, or there may exist, an immediate risk to the health of persons anywhere in Ontario...." It goes on to say that the premises are required in order to address that risk, the emergency health risk.

Under the HPPA—and this is already in the legislation because of the limited ability to take over—the occupier or the owner of the premises, as the case may be, would be entitled to compensation for the use and occupation of the premises in accordance with the Expropriations Act.

I see the Speaker is getting out his magic watch, so I'm just thinking that perhaps I will end after that explanation of that one amendment I wanted to talk about. Perhaps sometime in February I'll be able to tell you about the other amendment. So I'll keep you all in suspense until we get to the new year.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Well, indeed, my little pocket watch does say that we've had a

good afternoon and that this House is adjourned until 9 of the clock on Thursday, December 9.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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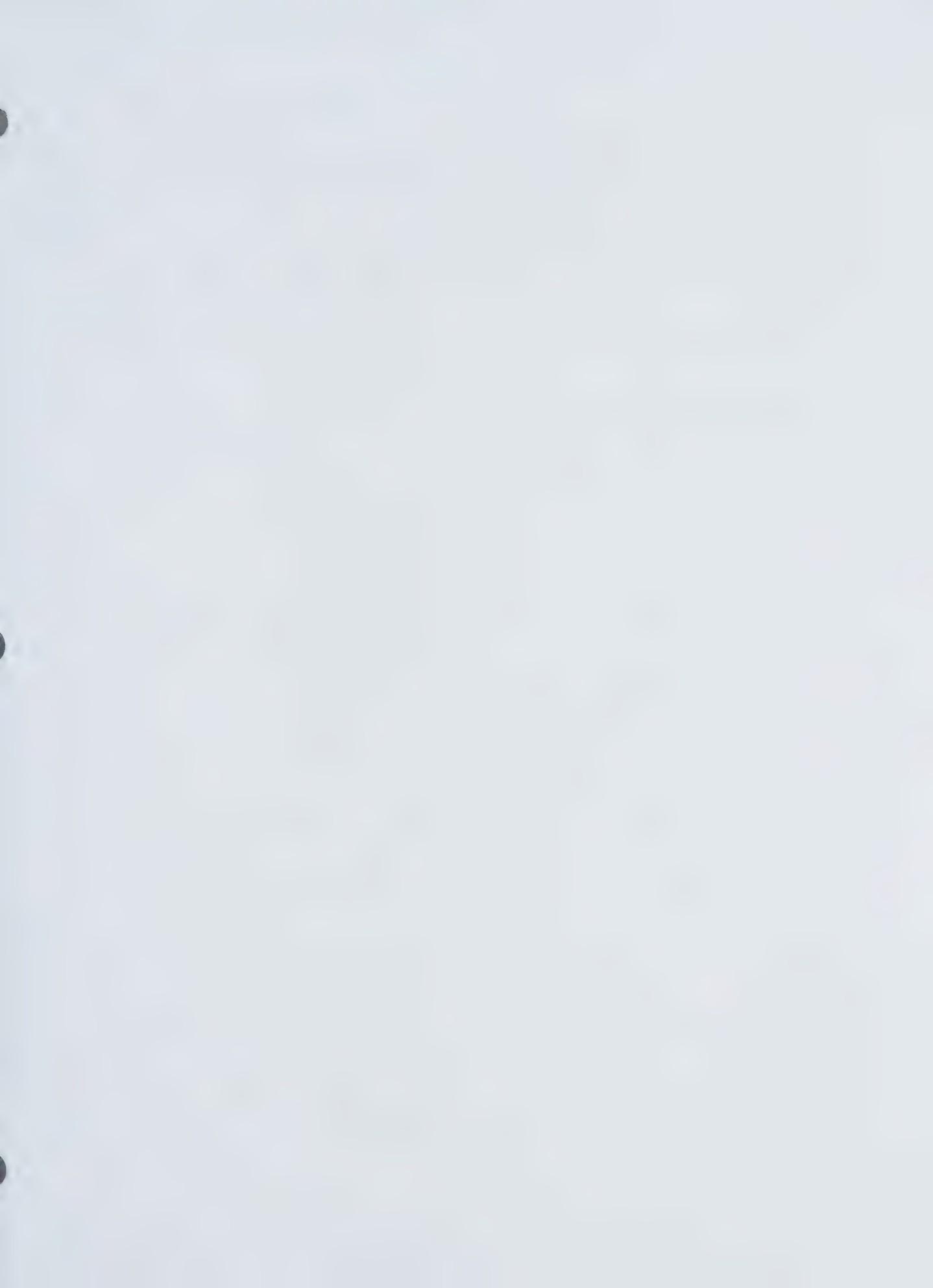
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Government
Publications

No. 82



Nº 82

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

Second Session, 39th Parliament

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Thursday 9 December 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 39^e législature

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Jeudi 9 décembre 2010

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière
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Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



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Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 9 December 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 9 décembre 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the aboriginal prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONG COMMUNITIES THROUGH AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 FAVORISANT DES COLLECTIVITÉS FORTES GRÂCE AU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 8, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 140, An Act to enact the Housing Services Act, 2010, repeal the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 and make complementary and other amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 140, Loi édictant la Loi de 2010 sur les services de logement, abrogeant la Loi de 2000 sur la réforme du logement social et apportant des modifications corrélatives et autres à d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted to stand in my place and speak about an important topic which concerns many people in the province of Ontario: the affordable housing strategy for the province of Ontario, which was proposed by our minister, by our government, to deal with this very important issue.

As you know, many people across the province of Ontario, especially the people with low incomes and the people who need social support, are looking forward to seeing a strategy to give them a chance to live with respect and dignity, and a place they can go to on a regular basis to sleep and raise their families and also create friends and a create a social network. That's why our government is introducing this important bill and is also opening it up for debate.

It's important to tell the people of Ontario what we've done since we got elected in 2003. As you know, in 2003 we got elected to this office. When we came to power, we didn't find any strategy for affordable homes. As a matter of fact, the people of Ontario suffered from a lot of cuts, especially in social programs, welfare, disability—all the affordable housing was being cut.

Back then, the Harris government—a majority of the members of the opposition party today were members of

that party. They were part of cutting the affordable homes strategy and cut almost \$5.5 billion from the people of Ontario. So when we came, we found the people suffering from lack of support, not enough housing, whether in London, Toronto, Ottawa, Windsor or any part of the province of Ontario. That's why, when we came, we thought it was important for us to look after the vulnerable people among us and give them the support they need in order to produce like everybody else in the province of Ontario.

We invested, in conjunction with the federal government—back then, it was the Paul Martin government—\$750 million in an affordable homes strategy. We're glad to see the federal government and the province of Ontario back to the business of affordable homes.

After that, we were left alone, so we had to come up with almost \$2.5 billion to put in an affordable homes strategy across the province of Ontario. A lot of the stock was in bad shape, not livable, whether in London, St. Thomas, Woodstock or anywhere in the province of Ontario. That's why we came up with another strategy to fix more than 150,000 units in Ontario: because it's important to make those units livable so that people are able to use them on a regular basis.

Also, we had a strategy for rent supplements, to support people who don't want to live in social housing. We had a strategy to support more than 35,000 units across Ontario. We also had a strategy—and it still exists—of \$5 million on a yearly basis. They call it the rent bank. It's to support many different people who otherwise cannot pay the rent, so they are able to live in their places. We prevent more than 25,000 eviction notices to people across the province. We also put caps on rent increases in our term, so that rents didn't rise more than 2.05%. As my colleague mentioned yesterday, under the watch of the Conservatives the increase was 2.9% and under the NDP it was 4.82%. I think we've tried to address many different aspects of this issue, whether in rent support, fixing the stock of social housing across Ontario or building new units.

I believe it was an incredible achievement, but can I say to you and to all the people of Ontario that we can celebrate success? No. That is why we're bringing this issue back for debate in this place: because it's important to celebrate success after we address this issue totally. That's why we open it up in this place: to listen to many different speakers from different sides of the House, to see how we can enhance our strategy to build and put in place a plan that can help us for years to come.

As you know, the poverty issue cannot be addressed by giving people extra cash. Poverty cannot be addressed

by increasing support for food banks. Poverty cannot be addressed by only fixing health care or child care supports or kindergarten. We have to deal with it in a total aspect. As you know, the majority of people in Ontario, in good times, pay more than half their salaries for rent. In some cases, for people who are living on low incomes, they pay 70% to 80% of their salaries for rent in order to have a place to live. That's why affordable homes are important for all of us in the province of Ontario.

It's important for us to fight the poverty issue in the province of Ontario. We've addressed this issue many different times, and we heard it clear and loud from many stakeholders across Ontario: from co-op housing, from social housing, from municipalities; from the poverty advocacy groups who came to this place many different times and spoke to us, spoke to the opposition, spoke to the NDP and every member of this House. They told us, clear and loud, "You have to invest in affordable housing. You have to invest in co-op housing. You have to support the vulnerable people and find a place for them to live and raise their families and live in peace and tranquility and live with dignity." Because we cannot afford to see people living in the streets. If people cannot afford to pay the rent, we cannot see people not able to continue their lives. We cannot afford to see a broken family as a result of not finding a place to live.

That's why we brought in many different initiatives. That's why, since we got elected in 2003, we came with a lot of programs, whether it's to build new units, support rental units, fix the older stock we have in the province of Ontario or to have a rent supplement support. All these initiatives help.

We have to have a national or provincial strategy for affordable homes. I wish the federal government would come to the table with us and help us launch this very important strategy, if they believe strongly that this is the only way to fight poverty and if they believe it's our responsibility as a government, whether municipal or provincial or federal, to fight this very important issue, which is to find affordable homes for many people in Ontario.

I come from London, Ontario, and many people come to our office asking us to find a place for them to live. The waiting list is 4,500 people. So this is a severe issue. Families working at minimum wage or who cannot find a job find it difficult to find a place to live. Some people are lucky to find affordable homes and social housing in the city of London or anywhere in the province of Ontario. That gives them the chance and ability to live in tranquility and provide for their families.

0910

As I mentioned at the beginning, most of their salary goes to rent, especially if they live in Toronto, where the average rent is about \$1,500. In downtown London or a little bit into the suburbs, it may be \$1,000. If you work at minimum wage for Tim Hortons or Walmart or anyplace in the province of Ontario, you're going to find it difficult to be able to pay the rent, the utilities and your telephone bill. You pay for many different things, and

you don't have enough to pay for food. That's why it's important to discuss this issue. It's important to have a vision and a plan for the future.

I listened yesterday or the day before—I don't remember—to the member from Burlington speaking on this subject. As the member from Durham and many other people said to us, she's the expert in that party on affordable homes. When she was regional chair for Halton, she said she was excusing the federal government of not being in the business of affordable homes. The member from Durham was speaking yesterday, and he said clear and loud that instead of dealing with the issue of affordable homes, let's fix our budget; let's strengthen our economy.

That member, I believe, forgot that we cannot walk by ourselves. Our ability to share the wealth, our ability to look after our vulnerable people—the only way we can fix our economy, the only way we can fix our strategy toward a brighter future is to help the vulnerable people among us to be able to live in respect and dignity, to be able to provide for themselves and for their families. We cannot leave them alone. Our responsibility is to give them the support they need. Our responsibility is to give them the push they need in order to walk with us, to walk with the rest of the community, to walk with the rest of the people of the province of Ontario.

It's sad how people change their position. The member from Burlington spoke a lot in the past and supported our government's strategy when she was chair of Halton region. I'll read what she said. She "applauds the province for addressing the issue of affordable" homes. This was in 2005, the year we introduced our strategy for affordable homes in the province of Ontario. The member for Burlington, Ms. Joyce Savoline, who was the Halton regional chair and also mayor of Burlington, spoke to the Burlington Post in an article entitled "Region Wants Details of Affordable Housing Program." It was published on November 6, 2005, on page 14. She said, "Ensuring there's a variety of housing options for all Halton residents is one of the most important elements in building and maintaining a strong community." So in 2005, the chair of Halton region, the member for Burlington at the present time, was in great support of affordable homes. Now, when she's sitting with the opposition, she has a different strategy; she has a different philosophy of how we can address the poverty issue and fix our economy.

I want to tell you that we, on this side of the House, continue to believe that government is fully responsible for building a strategy to include every person who lives in the province of Ontario. One of those strategies is to find affordable homes. Affordable homes help us to reduce the poverty level in the province of Ontario. Affordable homes help us to reduce homelessness in the province of Ontario. Affordable homes will help us keep families intact and living together in the province of Ontario. Affordable homes are important for many people, especially for those with low incomes and people in poverty, to live with dignity and respect. It's also important to know that affordable homes will keep a lot of crim-

inals away and minimize criminal activities in the province of Ontario. Let's face it: People who have nothing have no other choice except to go and steal or break into homes to sleep or break into homes to steal some money.

Our affordable housing strategy will create a social safety network for many people in the province of Ontario to be able to live in a safe environment and keep their families together, and also minimize and reduce the poverty level, minimize criminal activities and minimize homelessness in the province of Ontario, because it's important.

We are the people who took full responsibility to put our names on a ballot and got elected to come to this place to make rules and regulations. We have the privilege and honour to spend the taxpayers' money in the areas we think would benefit the taxpayers, to spend in areas to create a safety network in the province of Ontario. That is why the affordable housing strategy is important.

I saw an article about affordable homes in London the other day. The author is a prominent member of the city of London. He said that flexibility in affordable homes or support from the government that comes to the city of London on a regular basis is important to us, to give us the choice whether to have rent supplements or pay those monies, about \$1,500, to a shelter.

It's a big choice and a very important question whether we give the municipality flexibility to spend money on a shelter or create an affordable home strategy in conjunction with the province and, hopefully in the future, with the federal government. It would be a lot less, about \$500 to \$600 a month versus \$1,500 per month if you put a person in a shelter.

I think that if we put in a comprehensive strategy, it will save us a lot of money in the long run. We talk about our investments in kindergarten, how we are going to create a good environment for children to live in peace and be able to learn. If we create those elements, spending \$300 million and maybe \$1 billion in our education and health systems and people have no place to live, what did we do? In my own opinion, our society still has holes in it. Those have to be addressed by affordable homes.

When you're sending kids to school and they have no homes to go back to, it's going to be a problem. Those kids won't be able to read or study or comprehend. Also, if we build the best hospitals and the best health care in the province of Ontario and people are living on the street in stormy weather, in bad weather, and have no place to live and eat, what we do is create a lot of sick people.

Also, if a person who is worried about not finding a place to live or always worried about paying the rent at the end of the month and has no place to house his family and himself or herself, what are we doing? We're creating an unstable family, and most of the time the family breaks up and people go on social assistance, or people are not able to find a job or cannot go to their job at the right time on a regular basis.

I believe strongly that we have to work together as elected officials, on both sides of the House, to create a

strategy for affordable homes. I know the member opposite from Durham doesn't believe what I'm saying. Do you know what they believe? They believe they are going to be the government in 2011. That's what they believe. They're telling us, "When we're the government, we're going to cut all housing strategy; we're not going to invest money in affordable homes; we're going to cut in half all the social programs in the province of Ontario in order to balance our books and our budget." That's what they believe.

There are a lot of examples around this planet. So many different elements of right-wing or conservative strategy are floating around, not just in Canada but in many places on the planet, like England. In England, they cut social programs in half, cut policing in half, cut social programs in half, cut affordable homes in half.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: And they wonder why they're in trouble.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yes, they wonder why they are in trouble.

You know what? It's very simple to us on this side of the House: Either we invest now or we pay later in big money and big bucks and it will cost our social network a lot of instability.

I know the member opposite thinks he is telling me, "You know what? You're not going to be the government. Don't worry about it. We'll look after it."

Interjection.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yes, the people of Ontario can remember that. They're watching. They know what happened to them in 1995, when they cut all the social programs in half and they labelled all the homeless as criminals who had to be in jail. Everyone still remembers that.

The member of the government party back then said he was wondering why people couldn't find food, why they couldn't eat dented cans of tuna. You know what? Remember what Marie Antoinette said in Europe when she saw the protesters outside her palace. She looked out the window and was wondering why people were protesting. Somebody told her, "They have no food to eat." "Why can't they eat biscuits?" That's what happened. Do you know what was the result? What was the result?

0920

Mr. Ted McMeekin: She was on the cutting edge.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: That's it. Also, the member opposite was in government back then. What did they do? They labelled all the social programs as a burden on the government. They cut them in half. They labelled all the poor people as criminals. And they were wondering why people couldn't eat. "There's lots of tuna out there. Why not open a can of tuna and eat it?"

Mr. Ted McMeekin: A dented can of tuna.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: A dented can of tuna.

You know what? You have to have a heart when you are in this position. You have to have a plan. You have to include a new plan for everyone, whether they're weak or they're strong, whether they're poor or they're rich, whether they're able or disabled. Everyone in our gov-

ernment has a role to play. We believe in everyone and we believe everyone has a capacity, dignity and respect, and that's why we believe and we value every person. It doesn't matter what kind of class, what kind of colour, what kind of religion, what kind of social programs; we bless everyone, we believe in everyone, because we are the people who care about the future of this province. Hopefully, the opposite party got some of our blessings and understands our strategy and will come with us and work together to find the best way to serve the people of Ontario. I thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I think the member for London-Fanshawe has been celebrating way too much. His exuberance is not justified. In fact, they are leaving Ontario in a very dismal position.

I'm going to go strictly to the comments that were made in the media in the last day or so. This is from the Toronto Star, which is generally very friendly and more than fair with—here's what they say. This is from the Toronto Star. It says, "A Flurry of Announcements but Little Content." It says: "Poverty reduction plans poured out of Queen's Park so fast last week it was hard to keep up with the paper flow."

"But once all the packaging had been stripped away and the self-congratulatory rhetoric sifted out, there wasn't much left. Welfare rates were still below the poverty line. Healthy food was still out of reach. Affordable housing was still a dream."

"The 1.6 million Ontarians living in poverty had to settle for an 18-month study of social assistance, a slight loosening of rent rules for subsidized housing and an extensive list of the good things Premier McGuinty had" promised to do.

The predictor of future behaviour is looking at past behaviour. Past behaviour is that they have promised one thing and done completely the opposite. They've said they wouldn't raise taxes, yet they're the highest they've ever been. The people of Ontario can't be fooled any longer. If you want to know if spending money will solve all the problems—they've spent all the money; we have a \$20-billion deficit, and how is it at your hospital? How is it in your home care? How is it in long-term care? How is it when you're paying your taxes? How is it when you're paying your heating bill or filling your car with gas? They have pretty well destroyed Ontario, technically, on any measure, and the most affected people are the most vulnerable people, who are not being looked after by this government. In fact, you should stand, in your response, and admit that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: In fact, this is pure Orwellianism. Strong communities through Affordable Housing, yet in the province of Ontario we have the worst record in Canada for providing affordable housing. In Ontario, we have the worst per capita investment in Canada. We have 142,000 families waiting for affordable housing—the

worst record ever. We have 50% of our renters who can't afford to pay rent and their basic necessities on top of it. These are facts.

And 480 organizations comprised of housing activists have said that this so-called strategy doesn't meet any of the five criteria which they set out. As I say, it's positively Orwellian that they title it the Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act, because there's not one new unit of affordable housing promised in this, there's not one new dollar given, and there's not one new rent supplement provided. To make matters worse, there's not even the ability of municipalities to bring in inclusionary zoning to do anything on their own. They didn't even do that, which was required by and asked for by municipalities across this province.

We now have one in six children living in poverty. We have not seen poverty rates or homelessness rates or lack of affordable housing rates like this since the Depression, and I argue that it's getting even worse than the Depression. This is under Premier McGuinty. This is under Liberal rule in Ontario.

All you have to do is look at what's not in this bill to see what should be done in the province of Ontario where housing is concerned. Shame on the government. It brings to mind the words of Charles Dickens: "Are there no workhouses? Are there no prisons?" Because that's what's left under McGuinty's Ontario for those who lack housing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I do want to salute the member from London-Fanshawe this morning. Along with his mayor, Joe Fontana, he's been helping to take leadership in London, Ontario, which has had a huge dump of snow. The member there is helping to organize things and allowing the city of London to recover as quickly as possible. We salute that leadership.

But then again, I also salute his leadership in the field of housing. Here are the facts: Since 2003, we have made unprecedented investments of more than \$2.5 billion in this sector. That includes the largest affordable housing investment in Canadian history, \$734 million of partnership with the previous federal government. It's helping us build more than 22,000 new units, repair over 150,000 existing units and provide more than 35,000 rent supplements to Ontario's families in need. It is important to understand that this is over and above the roughly \$430 million we provide on an annual basis in housing, homelessness and other supports. We have stabilized the rent bank funding with \$5 million per year since 2003 and provided \$33.8 million, which has prevented more than 23,800 evictions.

I also want to look at the annual rent increase: under our government, 2.05% per year; under the Conservatives, 2.9% per year; under the NDP, 4.82% per year. Since we've had the privilege of governing, the third party has voted against every investment that we put forward in housing since 2003.

But I'm absolutely delighted that they saw the light yesterday. They voted for Bill 135. That will allow a 10%

decrease in electricity rates in the province of Ontario, starting January 1. We always welcome people to the party. Even though it's a bit late, they're with us now. They're working with us to help consumers in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: I too want to echo the wonderful praises that have been doled out to the member from London–Fanshawe, not only because of the work that he does in his riding but also because of the connectivity he makes between London and the rest of Ontario and, indeed, the rest of the world. So I want to make sure that it's on the record that I have this man in high esteem because of his commitment to not only the political process but also to the people who he represents. So I want to thank him for doing that.

The second thing I want to talk about is a repetitive theme that I've brought to this place on an ongoing basis. I love to hear the rhetoric pouring out of the lips of the opposition when they do not acknowledge the history that took place before 2003—from both parties. Stand in your places and tell us you did a better job. Stand in your places and tell us that you didn't cancel affordable housing. Stand in your places and tell us that there's been nothing right done in this government. When we were in opposition, we pointed out to the government the folly of cutting social services by 21%. It was a disaster. So let's talk about the history before you start throwing those stones, because the glass I hear breaking from the opposition is absolutely abhorrent.

0930

What I also want to ask is, were you listening to what the member was talking about in terms of not leaving people behind? The examples he gave you from around the world were very evident. When those types of right-wing agenda items took place, it took a while—I will tell you clearly, it took a while—but people began to recognize that that right-wing agenda of cut, cut, cut, cut and leave people behind doesn't work. Historically, it's evident that it does not work. And what did they continue to do? They continued to cut. And now, what are they saying they're going to do? They're going to protect the interest of the little guy. If we don't know what the history was in 2003, let's take a look at it and compare notes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member for London–Fanshawe has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I guess it's an important debate. The member from Durham, for you and the member from Parkdale–High Park, any time we compare our record to your record, you have no plan, whether for hydro, affordable homes or social programs. We do. That's why we debate in this House.

The member from High Park: The NDP were in power for many years. What happened? They broke the whole government. You know what? It's clear. We have put a cap on rent increases of 2.05%. They had it to almost 2.9%, 3%, so no comparison. We continue to invest.

I want to also thank the member from Peterborough and the member from Brant, who outlined the importance of the affordable housing strategy. You cannot leave people behind. The philosophy of cutting, cutting, cutting does not help. It didn't work for the Conservatives in 2003 and it's not going to work for any government in the future when you cut social programs, and affordable homes.

And when you do not invest in hydro, what's going to happen? We're going to have a blackout.

It's important for us to continue to include everyone with us, to continue to invest in affordable homes, to continue to invest in social programs, to continue to invest in health care. It's important to create that social network, an affordable one, for all the people to be able to live in peace and harmony, dignity and respect.

Our strategy on this side of the House is to reduce poverty, and affordable homes are one element of reduction of poverty in the province of Ontario, because when people find a place to live—they cannot live on the street. And you know what? They live in peace and harmony. They can put their family together. They can plan for the future. When you have no place to live, how can you plan? How can you send your kids to school and think about your health care? Nothing matters. The most important thing is to create a permanent shelter, a permanent home for the people of Ontario, an affordable one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly pleased to rise today and contribute to the debate on Bill 140, the Housing Services Act, 2010.

I think, as everybody in this House recognizes, affordable housing is a most critical component of any compassionate society's social safety net. It is imperative that we all provide and work together to make sure those who are poor, those who are vulnerable and those who are disfranchised have access to housing that is both affordable and also of the highest quality possible. Unfortunately, what we're seeing today in the province is that the housing needs of Ontario's disadvantaged are being ignored. We're seeing that there are many difficulties that these people encounter when they're trying to access a home for their family that is both safe and dignified.

Unfortunately, this bill that was introduced and anything related to the housing strategy does not contribute to increasing the stock of housing that is available or reducing the wait-list. Again, we see that the initiative and what the government has talked about is dependent on funding from the federal government, but we just have not seen any commitment to new provincial operating or capital dollars for housing.

I've heard the members opposite talk about what it does and what they're doing. I guess I can stand here as a member of the opposition—my job is to hold the government of the day accountable—and I could be very critical of this bill, which I'm going to be, but I think I'd like to focus on an article that I saw in the Toronto Star; it was by Carol Goar.

Interjection.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: We're talking about now.

Carol Goar, on December 6, earlier this week—the headline was, “A Flurry of Announcements but Little Content.”

This is what she said in the Toronto Star: “Poverty reduction plans poured out of Queen’s Park so fast last week it was hard to keep up with the paper flow.

“But once all the packaging had been stripped away and the self-congratulatory rhetoric sifted out, there wasn’t much left. Welfare rates were still below the poverty line. Healthy food was still out of reach. Affordable housing was still a dream.

“The 1.6 million Ontarians living in poverty had to settle for an 18-month study of social assistance, a slight loosening of the rent rules for subsidized housing and an extensive list of the good things Premier Dalton McGuinty had done for them.

“The week began with the release of the government’s long-awaited affordable housing strategy”—and I just digress for a minute because, as we know, this housing strategy had been promised by three successive Liberal housing ministers, and Carol Goar makes reference to that, too. She indicates that, “Three successive Liberal housing ministers promised a long-term plan and produced nothing.”

This has been ongoing since 2003, so I don’t know how this government can stand and say that they’re a compassionate, caring group of people, because they’ve had seven years to deliver for the people who need housing in the province of Ontario. They’ve had seven years to address poverty. They’ve had seven years to address welfare. And we’re not seeing any results yet.

They then go on to say that the fourth Liberal housing minister who had promised a long-term plan and produced nothing was Rick Bartolucci, who “finally delivered a blueprint”—notice the word “blueprint”—“entitled Building Foundations: Building Futures.” But then she goes on to say that, “Nowhere in the 17-page document was there a pledge to build social housing.” And that is what is key. You can talk about being compassionate, you can talk about being caring and you can say you were going to do something over the past seven years, but here we are approaching another provincial election and, as Carol Goar says, nowhere in Mr. Bartolucci’s blueprint was there a real pledge to build social housing. “All the minister offered the 142,000 low-income Ontarians on the waiting list for a rent-gearied-to-income apartment was a commitment to loosen the rent collection rules.” What a slap in the face to the people who wanted housing.

She goes on to say, “A second disappointment was that Bartolucci did not respond to entreaties for a housing benefit that would narrow the gap between the rent private landlords charge and the amount low-income Ontarians can afford. The minister merely said he would consider the idea.” Then Mr. Bartolucci is quoted as saying, “Despite significant global economic challenges, we have not removed a single penny of the funds earmarked for housing.” Yes, but there also were no new funds. There

was no new social housing for the 142,000 people who are on the waiting list.

Then we get an announcement following this from the community and social services minister, Madeleine Meilleur. Again, she comes out—and we’ve seen a two-year delay and we’ve seen excuses—and she says that they’re going to launch the social assistance review promised in the government’s poverty reduction strategy. It’s going to happen over 18 months. Well, ladies and gentlemen, that is going to take us beyond the next election campaign. That’s going to take us until June 2012. So again the Liberals, despite their commitment to address this issue, have not lived up to it or made any improvement whatsoever in regard to the introduction of a poverty reduction strategy. Just like the housing, it’s been all words.

0940

So they’re never going to have to, as Carol Goar says, defend “their punitive treatment of the poor in next fall’s election.” Then, of course, she goes on to talk about what happened with the \$250 special diet allowance and the release of Minister Brotén’s Breaking the Cycle progress report on poverty reduction. At the end of the day, she concludes her remarks in the Toronto Star of December 6 by saying, “By week’s end, it was clear that, for all the paper his government had churned out and all the announcements his ministers had made, McGuinty had very little to say about reducing poverty.” That is Carol Goar in the Toronto Star on December 6.

So let’s get back to the bill at hand. Supposedly, this is about affordable housing. Supposedly, it’s about a promise the government has made since 2003. However, what we see today is that the government has turned a blind eye to the over 142,000 households that are waiting for affordable housing in Ontario.

In this province today we need to take a look at the situation. We need to understand that there are 142,000 households who are waiting for affordable housing units. This is a huge list; and this list, by the way, does not include the people who need affordable housing or people who are currently spending well beyond what they can afford on housing. This list only includes people who are actually in the process of waiting for a unit. We know that the list is much longer.

What we’re seeing is an increase to the list of about 9% from last year alone. We’ve seen a rise in the number of households who are waiting. In fact, if you take a look at 2004 and you take a look at today, we’ve seen during the term of this government an increase of about 22% of people in this province who are waiting for affordable housing. It looks like—because the government has made no commitment to new, additional affordable housing—that they could be forced to wait 10 to 12 years for an affordable house. That is totally unacceptable. It is disgraceful that that is happening in Canada and in our own province of Ontario.

As the member for Parkdale–High Park pointed out last week, there are “250,000 families who pay more than 50% of their income on … housing.” Well, take a look at your own paycheque and think if you had to spend half of

your paycheque towards housing; that is simply not sustainable. It's going to be a very short time before these families will also join the waiting list for affordable housing.

Action needs to be taken now. This government promised in 2003, and again in the 2007 election, that they would take action. However, they've only paid lip service to a very serious problem. We've only heard large announcements and grandiose statements, but no new housing. People have been waiting for action for seven years, but they were let down by the most recent announcements.

So we have a piece of legislation that we're debating here today that is underwhelming, to say the least. It's quite distressing to think that it's taken the government seven years to develop this disappointing affordable housing plan and coinciding legislation. It's disappointing. It appears as though the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing mailed this in, because the bill accomplishes very little. It does make some revisions to the way municipal service managers can spend provincial funding, and amends the Planning Act to allow for secondary units.

It doesn't address the many systemic problems which today serve as significant obstacles to affordable housing. There is no thorough strategy here to address the needs of Ontarians who desperately need affordable housing.

Perhaps what is most worrying about this bill is its complete lack of ambition. It contains no clear goals or objectives. It's just another bill, with no context, and it's not going to effect any real change.

If we are to correct and improve Ontario's affordable housing situation, we need creative thinking and we need innovative solutions. In fact, that was what the stakeholders were looking for. There were consultations: 485 housing stakeholders were consulted for over six months on this bill. They did offer to this government thousands of submissions. But what most of them did concentrate on—they asked for four distinct actions. They asked for new units, new money, rent supplements and inclusionary zoning provisions.

These are the front-line workers who asked for those four actions on the part of the government. They are the experts who work in the housing field every day. They know what the challenges and the difficulties are. But this government did not respond to their requests, because the bill contains no new units for families who need affordable housing; there is no new money; there is not a housing benefit; there are no rent supplements; and it doesn't even include a provision for inclusionary zoning.

This bill is really an abdication of responsibility on the part of the government. It does, however, download enormous amounts of responsibility onto the municipal service managers. They are now tasked with developing and implementing their own affordable housing plans.

I think what we see here is a government that, after seven years of promises, simply is admitting they don't know what to do. They have no new ideas, they have no money and they are not prepared to offer additional

affordable housing to the people who so desperately need it.

The stakeholders have been pleading with the government for seven years to take decisive action on housing, but this bill provided them with nothing but platitudes. In fact, it's rather disappointing to the many stakeholders, the 485, who didn't see their requests given any attention. They all identified the same needs, but the government, once again, chose to ignore them. They asked for bold targets on housing units and sustainable funding for municipalities to enable long-term planning, but they did not receive a response.

So today we have a bill that doesn't help municipalities in the province of Ontario. In essence, the buck has been passed to them. In essence, they have been told that they're now responsible for the hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who have no access to housing. But there was no funding for housing strategies, and it's going to be difficult for municipalities to plan for the future and develop long-term goals when they have no idea as to what funding may or may not be available over the long term.

How can we expect our municipalities to devise and execute long-term housing strategies without knowing whether the provincial government is even capable or willing to provide the necessary funding? I'm not sure if the government realizes that the responsibilities that they have downloaded to the municipalities are impossible to carry on and do without any assurance of any funding for the future.

0950

We have a government with seven years in office that ends up, after numerous promises, introducing an empty bill that doesn't provide for the building of one single unit. We are not seeing any decrease in the waiting list whatsoever. All we're seeing is a downloading of responsibility to Ontario municipalities. The bill is another attempt on the part of this government to shift responsibility. It will allow the Liberals, I guess in the future, to start blaming municipalities for failing to deliver the housing.

But you know, I think this bill is a reflection on the ineptitude of this government. This bill is leaving Ontario's most disadvantaged without any hope. It's also an indication that this government is out of steam. It's tired, and they're not capable of solving the housing problem.

Again, it's an attempt by the government to say that any changes are contingent upon the federal government. The federal government has made it clear that they will be removing themselves from the housing business. Housing is a provincial issue. It is the province's responsibility to ensure that affordable housing is built and is accessible. It's disappointing today to see a bill that assumes that a one-size-fits-all approach is capable of solving the problem.

I want to congratulate the member for Burlington, the member who's responsible for this issue. I think she's done an outstanding job in pointing out the deficiencies with this bill. I think she stressed the fact that many On-

tarians don't need long-term housing assistance, but they do need some assistance to get back on their feet. This assistance could have been made available in this bill in the form of a housing benefit, but it was not made available here. Other jurisdictions have been providing that housing benefit: British Columbia, Manitoba and Quebec.

There's much that could be said about this bill. I think at the end of the day, we realize that it falls short of meeting the needs of Ontarians in this province who desperately need affordable housing. I think we see a government that promised in 2003 and 2007 to take action, but as I have indicated today and others have indicated as well in our attempt to hold this government accountable, it isn't going to create one additional unit of affordable housing for the people in this province who so desperately need it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I listened intently to the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. What she said is absolutely correct: This bill will not create one new unit of affordable housing. Not one new dollar will go to affordable housing; not one new rent supplement. Moreover, it won't even amend the Planning Act so that municipalities can take some real action through inclusionary zoning.

We've had four housing ministers. We've had three years of promises. We've had six months when we've waited past the time when we wanted a housing strategy—and it's starting to sound like a carol. There's no partridge or pear tree at the end of it, though. There's absolutely nothing at the end of it. In fact, we are number 10 of 10 provinces, the worst record among all the provinces.

We spend \$64 per capita on affordable housing. By contrast, Saskatchewan spends four times as much—one province. We are literally the worst, and what do we have to show for it? Some 142,000 families waiting an average of 10 to 12 years for affordable housing. Fifty per cent of those who rent cannot afford to pay their rent and also buy the necessities of life—50%. The member for Kitchener-Waterloo is absolutely correct: 250,000 Ontarians spend more than 50% on overhead that relates to housing. That's untenable. That cannot be sustained. These are figures the likes of which we haven't seen since the Great Depression. No other government has overseen such devastation in the housing quarter as the McGuinty Liberals have.

Then we get this Orwellian Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act. No strong communities and no affordable housing to be had in this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I listened very intently to the member for Kitchener-Waterloo, and frankly, she is wrong. She is wrong in everything that she said.

Let's start correcting the record. Here's what the member for Kitchener-Waterloo refused to support in her riding: 1,398 affordable housing units created in her

riding; 8,397 units repaired in her riding; 377 housing allowances and rent supplements in her Kitchener-Waterloo riding; 1,168 evictions prevented in her Kitchener-Waterloo riding. Why hasn't she stood up and supported these people? Our government has. Our government has built the units. Our government has repaired the units. Our government has prevented people from being evicted.

I listened to my colleague from Parkdale-High Park. What a sorry excuse for a critique. Listen to what's happened in Parkdale-High Park, and this member really needs to pay attention to that:

—5,066 affordable housing units created in the riding of Parkdale-High Park: Why isn't that member standing up and supporting that?

—92,565 units repaired in that riding: Why hasn't that member for the NDP stood up and supported that?

—3,591 housing allowances and rent supplements in that same riding, and 4,769 evictions prevented.

One wonders what these acronyms stand for with the other parties. I know that NDP really means "never developed a plan," but I'm sure PC means "public cuts."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Kitchener-Waterloo has stood for her riding and has been successfully supporting her riding for many years, and the member who just spoke should probably take a bit of a breather.

The real thing is, when you listen to the Liberals talk, much has been promised and much has been said, but really, they have made more talk about it than anything else. If you look at the article that Ms. Witmer referred to, she hit it right on the head: There's been a lot of talk and very little action. Even if you look at the articles this morning in the paper about how the province of Ontario is being let down by the government—I think the article is "Home Care Report a Wake-up Call for McGuinty."

When you look at the real issues, we all support having a strong ability to have a place to call home. Every side of the House recognizes that, as part of the poverty reduction task force strategy, there's not one nickel in this report. Most of the report talks about the federal money. This is the Building Foundations: Building Futures report. In that report, almost \$900 million, the money that the member spoke of, is actually federal; Stephen Harper money. Let's tell the facts. Your bill here hasn't got one nickel of money for housing.

Let's tell the people of Ontario the truth. Where are we today? Ask yourself: Are we better off? The real question here on any debate is, are you better off today than you were a few years ago? No, you're not. We have a deficit, we have a debt and we have an impending disaster in health care. Not one long-term care, let alone shelter for people. How about taking care of the frail and elderly?

I am so discouraged and distracted by anything they say that I'm losing confidence by the hour.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Seeing none, the honourable member for Kitchener-Waterloo has two minutes for her response.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I do appreciate the comments that were made by the member for Parkdale-High Park. I think she has been a very strong advocate for those in this province who are disadvantaged, who are vulnerable and who are in need, and I think she made some excellent points.

The member from Mississauga-Streetsville I don't think understands what's in the current bill that we are debating. The current bill was seven years in the making. This current bill was based on promises that had been made by Premier McGuinty in the 2003 and 2007 elections that we would actually see a plan for affordable housing. This bill, I would remind the member, contains absolutely no new funding for additional housing. It doesn't contain any reference to new affordable housing units.

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Certainly, for those who made representation, of which there were almost 500 people, it is very, very disappointing, because obviously, just like the poverty reduction strategy, from the time they were elected in 2003 until well after the next election, we're not going to see much progress in this area whatsoever. We also know that if we are to reduce poverty, it is important that people have access to good housing and affordable housing. When we think that today some people are spending 50% of their salary on housing, it's simply not sustainable, and they're soon going to join that waiting list.

I also want to thank my colleague from Durham. My colleague from Durham has been a strong and passionate advocate for all of the people in his community and people throughout the province of Ontario. I applaud him, and I appreciate his remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have to tell you, I really, really appreciate the speech that was made by the member from Kitchener-Waterloo. I agreed with 100% of everything she said, which is remarkable. You have to understand that when I agree 100% with the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, we've got something going here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): May I just interrupt for a moment? Are you doing your leadoff speech?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, we're standing down the leadoff speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Okay.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I think we had unanimous consent to do that yesterday.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you very much.

I just love Conservatives in opposition; I really do. They get better and better every year. Every year that I listen to their speeches, I say, "Good God, there's a lot

going on." I just think with four more years in opposition, they're going to get better. They mature as they stay in opposition. Don't you find, member from Rainy River, that they get better with every successive year?

Mr. Howard Hampton: Better with age.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's like a good bottle of wine. You have to age it longer and longer.

And by the time they get back into government, they will have had so much social democracy built into their foundation that they're going to be a whole lot better than they were in the past. That's what I'm dreaming of. So I don't want them to rush into government too quickly. I don't want that to happen too quickly because I've listened to a whole lot of speeches by my colleagues here on the right, and I tell you, I'm getting to like them.

In fact, I was going to quote Carol Goar as well. It's amazing how ad idem we are with each other. You understand that when the Toronto Star beats you up, it's a problem. You know that, right? Just in case you didn't know that. When the Toronto Star editorially and/or with its columnists beat you up, you are in doo-doo.

I just wanted to remind you in case you forget, because I know the member from Mississauga-Streetsville is a real trooper, and so is the member from London-Fanshawe. You can always count on them to stand up and defend the government, no matter what. But you need the troopers. You need them because without them, you don't stand up, right? So member from Mississauga-Streetsville, you keep doing what you're doing; they need you.

But Carol Goar from the Toronto Star—man, it was a tough article. It was dated December 6. I kept it because it was so good. It says "A Flurry of Announcements but Little Content." Ouch, is what I normally say. Member from Peterborough, you say that too, every now and then. So when Carol Goar says that, which is in line with what we New Democrats normally say, I think you've got to listen. At least, that's what I think.

"The week began with the release of the government's long-awaited affordable housing strategy. Three successive Liberal housing ministers promised a long-term plan and produced nothing." That hurts. "The fourth, Rick Bartolucci finally delivered a blueprint entitled Building Foundations: Building Futures."

She says—so that you don't have to say that the New Democrats are saying it, or Liz Witmer from Kitchener-Waterloo—"nowhere in the 17-page document was there a pledge to build social housing." She said that. We say that. The member from Kitchener-Waterloo says it. You've got a little problemo on your hands, right?

Now, the member from Mississauga-Streetsville stands up and says, "We did this in your riding. We did that in that riding. How come you don't say we did this and did that?" It has got nothing to do with Bill 140, Strong Communities. But to your promise of 2003, member from Mississauga-Streetsville—you might take note of this, because you're a college professor; take notes on this. In 2003, the McGuinty government promised to build 20,000 new affordable housing units in three years.

Are you listening, member from Mississauga—Streetsville? You were going to do that in three years. Did you do it? Just tell me. Did you do it?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Done.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You see how much of a trooper he is? That's why they love you on the other side, because they can count on you to say whatever it is that the Premier wants you to say.

You didn't do that, and you could have done it. You could have kept your promise, because we had a great economy in 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007. The economy was booming. There was money, in fact. You could have done it, and you didn't do that in your seven years. In every year you built 1,900 units, to give you credit. But if you add it up, you are far short still—still—of the promise you made in 2003. You can't just paper over some of this stuff and pretend that the people are not watching and that they're not listening. The 434 housing organizations say that this bill does nothing for those who are in distress and who are desperately looking for the government to support them with their housing needs.

Here are some of the facts: A book released this week, *Persistent Poverty: Voices From the Margins*, outlines the extent of the housing crisis. Some "1.3 million Ontario households are precariously housed; that is, they pay more than 30% of their income on housing." Some "120,000 Ontario families live in overcrowded housing; 80,000 Ontarians live in substandard housing that requires major repairs; 140,000 households are on affordable housing waiting lists in Ontario, a number that increased by 10% from 2009 to 2010. Housing insecurity is rising because energy costs have gone up 50% in the past decade. Rents have increased faster than inflation, and the incomes of tenants have stagnated or declined. Half of the renters do not have enough income to pay for housing and other necessities such as food, medicine, transportation, education and so on."

Persistent Poverty spoke to hundreds of people struggling with poverty and insecure housing from across Ontario, people like Jacob, a young man from Toronto, who said this at a recent community meeting held by the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition: "A bachelor apartment costs \$600, maybe \$700, a month in Parkdale. Rooming houses are terrible. People steal your food, mess up the bathroom, get drunk and bring friends home. My socks and underwear were stolen from the laundry. How do I pay a high rent on my ODSP of \$1,092 per month? It would be worse if I were on \$585 from OW. Am I supposed to steal?" is what he says.

People like Harry, a middle-aged man from Brantford, who said, "If I can become homeless, there's not another person in the world who can't become homeless. Even people who are wealthy are very close to being in poverty—one death, one broken relationship, one loss of a job. There are not a lot of choices for housing, and it often means living next to people who are smoking pot or crack."

These are the stories that we get from people, men and women who live in this province. We have a terrible

record in terms of our spending on housing. We are number 10. I often make fun of the government and make fun of the minister of post-secondary education when they talk about how much money they're spending, and on a per capita basis, in Canada we are last; one of the strongest provinces in Canada, and we are last. When Prince Edward Island spends more than we do, we are in trouble. When we pay the highest tuition fees in the country, as one of the wealthiest provinces in the country, we are in trouble. And when we are last in building housing for those who are in need in Canada, this is not something that the government can be proud of.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And that's the problem. The services we're giving to them are so poor that they are impoverished each and every year that Liberals are in government. When you give away \$5 billion cumulatively, over a three-year period, to corporations that do not create the jobs that we so desperately need—and we have seen the evidence for this over the last 15 years. Corporations have been getting tax cut after tax cut each and every year, and you would think that we would have jobs each and every year and the jobs would be increased each and every year, that unemployment would be lower each and every year, yet, with all of the billions we give away, we have the highest unemployment—not the highest, but Ontario has unemployment that we haven't seen in a long, long time. It's not good.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Rosario, my wife is watching you this morning.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm glad she is.

It is not good. We have a situation here in Ontario where the previous Conservative regime downloaded housing to the municipalities, which no other jurisdiction in the world, save one, does, and you have not had the strength and the conviction, after seven years, to say, "Enough. We can't allow housing to be paid by the property tax—we can't allow that; it's wrong—because no other jurisdiction in the world downloads housing to a municipality." Yet, after seven years of government, you still allow that bad policy to continue when you know that municipalities simply do not have the money to provide for the housing needs of our citizens in Ontario. We—you, not me; you have a bad record when it comes to housing, and Bill 140, Strong Communities, is only strong in the title and nothing else. The title of the bill reminds me of a previous regime where the strength of their bills was in the title only and in the name only, but the content was empty, similar to what—and I echo what Carol Goar from the *Toronto Star* says, "A Flurry of Announcements but Little Content."

We can do better, and we can and should be more helpful to those in need. That's the role of government. It is the obligation of government to be there when the markets fail us. When the markets fail us and they are not building—because the private sector doesn't build public housing, where they make very little money; they only build it when governments invest. If the government is not there to help those in need when the markets fail us,

then we're losing not only our civility but the civilization that we depend on.

The member from Parkdale–High Park will be doing her hour when we come back. I'm looking forward to that speech, because she has so much more to say on this.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: It's my honour and pleasure to introduce page Alexandra Oleiche's mother, Fida, and Mr. Zein Oleiche. Thank you very much for coming here today.

Mr. Peter Shurman: It's my pleasure to introduce a young man from Oakville, Ontario, who has been helping out in my office for the last couple of weeks. Andrew Muncaster is there in the west members' gallery. This is his first question period.

Mr. Rick Johnson: On behalf of Minister Chiarelli, I'd like to introduce his Ottawa office staff, who are here this morning: Elizabeth Caracristi, David Salter, Stephanie Barry and Lauren Essiambre.

Mr. John O'Toole: I am pleased to introduce the parents of page Joshua Turner: Denise Turner and Scott Turner. Welcome to our proceedings here today. Watch your son perform remarkably.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Halton and page Tony Mistak, to welcome his father, Gary Mistak, to the Legislature today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm in receipt of a notice of a point of privilege from the member for Simcoe–Grey, Mr. Wilson, on the same subject I ruled on yesterday. Without hearing from the member, I'm prepared to make my ruling now, as standing order 21 allows me to do.

Given that the nature of the member's point is substantially the same as the one ruled upon yesterday, I do not believe I have much further to add.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. These are important for all members to listen to.

However, for the benefit of all members, let me repeat a portion of that ruling: "The members have characterized the staffer's videotaping of elected members in the hallways of this place as 'reprehensible.' I myself find the practice distasteful at best. In this technological age, when video and photographic devices are so common, I can see that it is tempting to use them for political purposes. Unfortunately, that temptation is succumbed to all too frequently" and "I am not surprised the practice has

given rise to the complaints.... I would prefer if the political process rose to a level of dignity our surroundings here suggest it deserves."

As I indicated yesterday, while I have serious concerns about this activity occurring and strongly suggest that it should not continue, it does not amount to a *prima facie* case of privilege. But I might add here that at the same time in my ruling yesterday that I made reference to activities that I consider unworthy to this place, I note that at that very moment I was making that statement, such activity was underway outside the chamber doors. I trust forethought will take place before any of these kinds of behaviours are repeated.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACT

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Yesterday, the member for Thornhill, Mr. Shurman, raised a point of privilege with respect to statements made in the House by the Minister of Tourism and Culture, Mr. Chan, that the member for Thornhill alleges were at variance with the facts. The government House leader, Ms. Smith, also made representations on this point.

The remarks in question stem from question period on December 2, when the minister responded to two different questions, one from the member from Wellington–Halton Hills and the other from the member for Thornhill, relating to matters concerning the Niagara Parks Commission. The member for Thornhill alleges that the response to his question contained incorrect information. The member further points out that the minister's error has been drawn to his attention on several occasions in the House, but the minister has not explicitly corrected his statement. In the view of the member for Thornhill, the member's willingness to knowingly let the incorrect information remain on the record amounts to a contempt of the House.

The member raised, as one of the authorities in his case, a 2002 incident in the House of Commons of Canada involving then minister Art Eggleton. This very case has been previously raised in this House to support a similar point of privilege involving alleged incorrect statements by a minister.

At that time, Speaker Carr had this to say: "I'm reluctant to accord applicability of that ruling to this case.

"Firstly, in that case Mr. Eggleton concurred that contradictory statements had been made and that clarification of the reasons for this in a suitable forum was required. Secondly, I see no precedential value to Speaker Milliken's ruling—within the ambit of parliamentary privilege—since, if the ruling is carefully read, it becomes apparent that a *prima facie* case of privilege was not explicitly found."

I agree with Speaker Carr, and do not consider the Speaker's ruling to offer any meaningful support to the contentions by the member for Thornhill.

The member for Thornhill also drew my attention to a ruling this past May by Speaker Toth in the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly. There are two things about

the Toth ruling that also mitigate its applicability to this current case. First, that matter concerned a denial by an officer of the Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, that he had been consulted by the Minister of Health on a regulation. While the minister told the House he had done so, the privacy commissioner corresponded to all members of the assembly to advise them otherwise. That obvious and serious conflict between a minister and an officer of the assembly simply could not be allowed to stand, and needed to be considered by the House and resolved. For this reason, Speaker Toth found a *prima facie* case of privilege had been made out. But the fact situation is quite different than the one raised by the member for Thornhill.

The second issue with the Saskatchewan ruling is that Speaker Toth found a *prima facie* case of privilege on the issue of misleading statements allegedly being made to the House, in the absence of an admission by the member making the remarks that this was so. Speaker Toth was guided by precedents of his assembly which established that—unlike in the Ontario assembly and others—“in Saskatchewan, the threshold of proof of an offence is not restricted to an admission of guilt. Contempt has been found on the basis of evidence. In this situation,” Speaker Toth continued, “the minister has not admitted to have misled the assembly so the case must be reviewed on the documentary evidence provided by the opposition House leader.”

Speaker Toth was correct that his approach was at odds with the practice of other Parliaments, including ours. Perhaps the most decisive declaration and confirmation of this was made by Speaker Carr in his ruling to the assembly on June 17, 2002. Speaker Carr examined both the Eggleton case and the famous Profumo case in the United Kingdom. He fully accepted the essential factors of the Profumo incident and stated that, “The threshold for finding a *prima facie* case of contempt against a member of the Legislature, on the basis of deliberately misleading the House, is therefore set quite high and is very uncommon.”

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

“It must involve a proved finding of an overt attempt to intentionally mislead the Legislature. In the absence of an admission from the member accused of the conduct, or of tangible confirmation of the conduct, independently proved, a Speaker must assume that no honourable members would engage in such behaviour or that, at most, inconsistent statements were the result of inadvertence or honest mistake.”

Yesterday morning, the Minister of Tourism and Culture rose on a point of order to clarify the remarks he made on December 2—presumably the same ones with which the member for Thornhill takes issue. The fact that even following the clarification the member for Thornhill still raised the point of privilege is perhaps an indication that the clarification didn’t clarify quite enough to remove the member’s doubt.

Nevertheless, the minister is presumably content with where the matter stands and feels his clarification yesterday removes confusion. I can discern nothing about any of his statements nor do I have any proved finding that would indicate a deliberate desire to mislead the House. Indeed, the member for Thornhill has not made that case. He himself admits that he is unable to say whether the alleged inaccuracy is “an error of commission or omission.”

I am of the view that the threshold set out by Speaker Carr in 2002 to support a finding of *prima facie* contempt of the House, on an allegation that a member has deliberately misled the assembly, has not been met in the case before me.

As was Speaker Carr’s finding in 2002, “I can only find that I am left with what amounts to a genuine disagreement between two honourable members. As a result, I am unable to find a *prima facie* case of contempt has been made out.”

ORAL QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier McGuinty and his Liberal government have become so out of touch they can no longer tell right from wrong. When asked to assess what he did wrong in reviving war measures for the G20 and then deciding to keep them secret from the general public, the Premier said, “We moved too quickly to provide that authority.”

1040

Sir, your mistake was hardly pace; it was what the Ombudsman rightly called a premeditated, conscious plan to bring forward war measures and keep them secret from the general public. Premier, what made you think that you could get away with this?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this yet again. I always appreciate the enthusiasm and the volume that characterize my honourable colleague’s interventions in this Legislature, but they’re not commensurate with the logic that ought to be there as well.

I’ll just reference my colleague to one particular paragraph in the Ombudsman’s report, where he says, “There is no fair basis for suggesting that the ministry’s purpose in” passing the regulation “was to infringe or deny freedom of expression.... More fundamentally, the regulation had the laudable purpose of protecting participants from harm either from terrorist enemies or from protestors....”

I would encourage you, Speaker, and Ontarians as well, to reference the Ombudsman’s report when it comes to characterizing our activities as a government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, the Ombudsman’s report is rightly called Caught in the Act. The Ombudsman said that you had—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Notwithstanding that the report of the Ombudsman is a document of this Legislature, I'm concerned that it is being used in a manner—that it is being used as a prop within this chamber. I've noticed a number of members, as their honourable leader was speaking, holding that document up. I would just ask that they not engage in that activity, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: In his report, Caught in the Act, the Ombudsman talks about how you had a premeditated plan to keep these war measures secret from the public.

Premier, you had a choice to have a debate in the Ontario Legislature about the extraordinary war measures you brought forward. You refused to put that before the House, and then you went further. You had a plan to keep it secret, and you said you were going to stick the blame on an inattentive media for not figuring this out. The public would only have true notice of these extraordinary war measures long after the G20 was over.

Premier, how in the world did you ever think you could get away with this?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I want to quote from the Ombudsman's report, because my honourable colleague—although he has heard it, it has failed, to this point in time, to register in him internally.

That quote again is, "There is no fair basis for suggesting that the ministry's purpose in" passing the regulation "was to infringe or deny freedom of expression...."

I might also add that it is passing strange for my honourable colleague, a gentleman who is absolutely committed to shutting down the Human Rights Tribunal in the province of Ontario, to stand up in this House and somehow pretend that he has a genuine interest in human rights. I remark, it is somewhat passing strange.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, the Ombudsman's report, again, entitled Caught in the Act, says that on June 3, you passed extraordinary war measures. For three weeks, for 21 days, no one outside of your cabinet knew anything about the law you deliberately kept secret until the first arrest popped the lid and blew the story wide open.

At that point in time, some earnest and honest public servant drafted a press release to clarify the war measures law to the general public, but the Ombudsman says in paragraph 177, "By the end of the day, the ministry had decided to scrap the idea of" the press release.

I ask you, Premier, who gave the order to kill the press release and keep this secret from the public?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I've had the opportunity to raise the comments offered by the Ombudsman on a number of occasions now. It's interesting, again—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's interesting, the new language and the new position adopted by my honourable colleague, who is pretzel-like in his ability to evolve—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier, I would just ask that you—

Mr. Toby Barrett: You're the one without the spine.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'll ask the Premier to withdraw his comment, please.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I withdraw that, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And the member from Haldimand–Norfolk will withdraw the comment that he just made as well.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I withdraw the comment about the spine.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, a quote from the Ombudsman. He says, "Typically, international summits attract protests, and protests can turn violent and even deadly. The world's leaders have also been subject to terrorist threats."

At the time my honourable colleague referenced the need to "contain ... violent thugs," but now he has an entirely different perspective. He would have us believe that he has become a champion of human rights. I'm not sure how he can reconcile that with his absolute determination to shut down the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal, which has been performing an absolutely valuable function for years on end; the tribunal that was supported, at one point in time, by the Progressive Conservatives here in Ontario. Apparently that party no longer exists.

I say to my honourable colleague, if you want to find out what happened at the G8 and the G20, read the Ombudsman's report.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: I know, Premier, that our questions are getting under your skin, but we are not going to give up. We are going to continue to fight on behalf of Ontario families, get to the bottom of this and make sure that Minister Bartolucci, who is responsible, gets the boot out of cabinet like he should.

Your minister, Minister Bartolucci, showed extraordinarily poor judgment in bringing forward this war measures act and then deciding to bury the truth from the public. For 21 days, Premier, your government conspired to keep the facts of the war measures a secret, and then when the ministry itself wanted to do a press release to explain this to the public, somebody, either you or your minister, gave the order to kill the press release. Here is a question that only the Premier can answer: Why don't you fire Minister Bartolucci on the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I understand how that line of questioning might serve my honourable colleague's political interests, but I'm not sure at all how it serves the public interest. You'd think if it was that important, the Ombudsman would have made reference to that.

I will draw my honourable colleague's attention to the following facts: He has been the Leader of the Opposition for 529 days. He's attended 134 question periods. He's asked over 800 questions. I would ask you to ask yourself on how many of those occasions, those individual 800 questions, he has ever advanced a practical, positive, progressive plan that speaks to schools for our families, health care for our families, a stronger economy for our families and a clean and safe environment for our families. The answer is zero. On not one single occasion has he stood up and spoken to a positive future for the families of Ontario.

1050

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Boy, everybody is antsy to get home for the holidays, nobody more so than the Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will please come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Frankly, that answer shows why this Premier has become so out of touch—that embarrassing answer on such a serious matter—and why Ontario families want to see change in the province of Ontario.

On June 7, according to the Ombudsman's report Caught in the Act, an email to your office, Premier, says, "So long as we can stress as best we can that this should be kept under wraps"—your war measures act, your pre-meditated plan to keep it secret from the public. Premier, this is not a failure to communicate. It is a premeditated plan to keep it secret from the general public.

You went out there, and you advertised changes of hours during the World Cup when it came to drinking time. But when it came to a war measures act, historic in the province of Ontario, you kept it secret.

Is the reason the minister is still in cabinet because it was actually you—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I'll reference my honourable colleague to the language used by the Ombudsman: "There is no fair basis for suggesting that the ministry's purpose" in passing the regulation "was to infringe or deny freedom of expression."

Again, I say to my honourable colleague: 529 days, 134 question periods, over 800 questions, not a single positive proposal put forward. The only thing we know for sure is that they want to take \$3 billion out of health care, they want to keep burning coal, they want to shut down full-day kindergarten, and they want to evict the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills from his seat.

Apart from those commitments, we're not aware of any positive, progressive proposal they want to put forward on behalf of Ontario families.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, seven and a half years, over 2,100 days, and you still refuse to take responsibility

for your actions and your misguided decisions that are impacting on Ontario families.

You, Premier, and your cabinet obviously can no longer tell right from wrong; you are so consumed with maintaining power in the province of Ontario. Look at your sorry record in the last six months alone: You signed a secret Samsung deal; you brought forward a secret plan to teach sex ed classes as early as grade 1; you brought in a secret tax on hydro; you brought in, on Canada Day, secret eco taxes that hit Ontario families hard; and now your secret, illegal war measures act.

Premier, what makes you think you can get away with this kind of secrecy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As they say, those who can, plan; those who can't, criticize.

We're experiencing an endless, relentless litany of criticism over the course of over 800 question periods. During that time, we've been working hard on behalf of Ontario families. In our schools, class sizes are down, test scores are up and graduation rates are up.

In our health care, we've got more MRIs, we've got more CTs, we've got shorter wait times, more nurses and more doctors.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members from Renfrew, Lanark and Nepean-Carleton: I would like to hear the answer. I'm having difficulty hearing the answer over your interjections.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And the interjections from the member from Eglinton-Lawrence don't help the situation either.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleagues maintain their pessimistic view of the world and our future here in Ontario. We continue to work hard to build a positive future for Ontarians.

As I was saying, in health care there are more doctors, more nurses, shorter wait times, more MRIs, more CTs. One million more Ontarians now have access to a family doctor.

Then there's the economy. Take a look at the auto sector, for example. It is back on its feet. There are more jobs, more production and more exports. We're working hard with the economy generally.

Then there's our green energy policy—thousands and thousands of new jobs as we clean up the air and ensure we have a reliable supply of electricity. We will never stop putting forward positive plans that meet the needs and expectations of Ontario families.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Who did the Premier consult with before secretly passing his illegal and unconstitutional changes to the Public Works Protection Act?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I want to reference my honourable colleague to the report prepared by the

Ombudsman. It is lengthy, it is detailed, it is thorough, which is perfectly in keeping with the approach brought by the Ombudsman in all of these affairs. I think that when we're looking to an authoritative characterization and definition of what we did as a government, it's really important to take a look at that report. I'd ask my honourable colleague to reference paragraph 221, where he said, "There is no fair basis for suggesting that the ministry's purpose" in passing the regulation "was to infringe or deny freedom of expression.... More fundamentally, the regulation had the laudable purpose of protecting participants from harm either from terrorist enemies or from protesters."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People expect their government to stand up for their interests. They expect representatives that they elect to be their voice, but after seven long years, this government has forgotten that. The secret decision to suspend civil liberties is just the latest example.

Last year, at this very time, the government was closing off debate on its decision to impose their unfair HST on an unwilling public. When did the Premier decide that he no longer has to listen to the people who sent him here?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague is complaining about an old law that's been on the books for decades, and yet when they had the opportunity to review that law in 1990, they chose not to.

We're doing a couple of things. First of all, we're going to respond in full to the recommendations offered by the Ombudsman. Secondly, we've asked former Chief Justice Roy McMurtry—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The other thing we're going to do, because we think it's very important, is we're going to await the findings and the recommendations of former Chief Justice Roy McMurtry with respect to the legislation in question. When we receive those recommendations, we will look at those in concert with the good ones put forward by the Ombudsman so that we can decide on a plan going forward. When we come up with that plan, I'm sure my honourable colleagues opposite will have an interest in that and we will ensure that they have the opportunity to speak to that.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The McGuinty government has grown increasingly out of touch. When the government passed their illegal and unconstitutional G20 law, when they slapped their unfair HST on daily essentials, when they cut private power deals that drove up the cost of electricity they forgot all about the Ontarians who sent them here. When did the Premier decide that he no longer has to listen to them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Every day my honourable colleague gets up and offers criticism. But the fact of the matter is that on over 80% of the bills that we introduced

as legislation and passed, the NDP supported us. On our Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, they supported us; on our Water Opportunities Act, they supported us; on our Children's Activity Tax Credit Act, they supported us; narcotics safety act, Ontario energy and property tax credit, pension benefits, broader public sector accountability, ticket speculation, the Ontario clean energy benefit—on 81% of the bills they in fact supported us.

The reason they're doing that is because they understand that the fact of the matter is, we're on the side of Ontario families. We're fighting for their schools, their jobs, their health care, their future. In their heart of hearts they recognize that and I want to acknowledge that.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier acknowledged that he should have "taken the necessary time" to communicate the illegal and unconstitutional legislation that he secretly passed before the G20. If time was the factor, when does the government think they should have told people about the decision to secretly pass this law and suspend civil liberties?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, the Ombudsman's report speaks for itself. We look forward to awaiting the report from Chief Justice Roy McMurtry. I will quote a bit more from the Ombudsman's report because I think it helps set the context for the times.

In paragraph 7 he says, "It wasn't that the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services didn't mean well in promoting the use of the act through"—the regulation—"to assist Toronto police in maintaining security during the summit. Typically, international summits attract protests, and protests can turn violent and even deadly. The world's leaders have also been subject to terrorist threats...."

"Traditionally, these international summit meetings have served as magnets for large-scale and at times violent protests.... On the second day of the G8 meeting held in the United Kingdom in 2005, suicide bombers killed more than 50 people on the subway and on a bus in London."

So that was the context. We were approached by the police to help them protect public safety. We responded quickly. In hindsight, I say we responded perhaps too quickly. We will learn from that, and we'll learn from the recommendations put forward by Chief Justice Roy McMurtry and the Ombudsman.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This Premier is trying to justify his unjustifiable behaviour.

On June 26, after the Toronto police chief claimed there was a so-called five metre rule in place and after the media had reported on it and after legal experts had notified both the chief and the government that the rule didn't exist at all, the Premier issued a statement saying, "I want to thank our police officers for upholding the rule of law and keeping our community safe."

How can the Premier seriously claim that his only problem was a failure to communicate when he never actually tried to communicate the facts or correct the misinformation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think there's a very important paragraph and I'll reference it again; it's paragraph 221. Notwithstanding the partisan perspective brought, perhaps understandably, by my honourable colleague, I think Ontarians are entitled to some disinterested, objective, impartial assessment of what took place. That's why paragraph 221 is so important.

"There is no fair basis for suggesting that the ministry's purpose in"—passing the regulation—"was to infringe or deny freedom of expression.... More fundamentally, the regulation had the laudable purpose of protecting participants from harm either from terrorist enemies or from protestors."

That in fact was the sentiment and the thinking that informed our actions as a government. We accept the report of the Ombudsman and we look forward to the recommendations as well of former Chief Justice Roy McMurtry.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier passed an illegal, unconstitutional law. He didn't tell the public about it, even when the new law was miscommunicated and used to arrest hundreds and hundreds of innocent people.

If the Premier didn't intend to mislead the public about his law, why did he go to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment she just made.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I withdraw, Speaker.

If the Premier didn't intend to mislead—didn't intend to confuse the public about his law, why did he go to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Rewithdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I withdraw, Speaker.

If the Premier didn't intend to obfuscate the reality about his law—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Withdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I withdraw, but I cannot understand how I cannot state the facts about what this Premier did and didn't do in the context of the G20. That is my job.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague has said—I think they made reference to illegality and unconstitutionality, and there has been no such finding made by either the Ombudsman—and we await the findings of former Chief Justice Roy McMurtry.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew will withdraw the comment that he just made, because I know exactly what he's alluding to.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to cite from paragraph 255 of the Ombudsman's report, and it reads as follows: "To their credit, once it was apparent that the police had misconstrued the intent of the regulation,

ministry officials were quick to seek assurance that the mistake would be corrected."

Given the circumstances, we in fact moved quickly to ensure that people truthfully understood the intent of the legislation. Again, I appreciate the enthusiasm with which my honourable colleagues oppose—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The city of Toronto wasn't consulted by the former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing before the extraordinary war measures law was passed. As the minister responsible for passing this law, this minister did nothing to ensure that Toronto municipal officials were informed. You should have resigned. Why didn't you?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member knows that we don't deal with points of order during question period, but the honourable member is also aware that any question directed to the Premier or a minister can be directed to the appropriate ministry to deal with the specific issues.

The Minister of Community Safety.

Hon. James J. Bradley: One thing I do know is that the officials of the city of Toronto were very much opposed to your federal friends imposing the G20 on the city of Toronto. When people were asked, virtually everybody I have heard from in the city of Toronto has indicated that they were very displeased that downtown Toronto was chosen as the site of the G20 summit because they recognized how difficult it would be to deal with a situation of this kind, bringing the 20 top terrorist targets—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Final warning to the member from Renfrew. To the Minister of Research and Innovation: There is no member above the rules within this House. If you have an issue with another honourable member in this place, don't have the cross-discussion on this floor. Take it outside of this chamber.

1110

Mr. Paul Miller: Yeah. Yeah.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The same applies to the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: As I indicated, I did not know that the city of Toronto had invited the summit here. I listened to the representative of the city of Toronto at the time, who was Mayor Miller, who indicated that he thought it was a bad location for this particular summit because he recognized all of the possibilities, with the 20 top terrorist targets in the world in downtown—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is: Why didn't this minister resign? He's refused to answer.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Member from Lanark, member from Oxford, member from Durham, member from Leeds.

Please continue, member from Burlington.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister is sitting there mouthing at us across the aisle. I don't know why he doesn't just stand up and speak.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will come to order. I think the ideal Christmas gift that every member of this House should receive is a copy of O'Brien and Bosc, about parliamentary practice and procedure and how we collectively should be dealing with one another in this House. I think it would be ideal reading for those blustery days between Christmas and New Year's.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, don't say it. I started to—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): But I honestly do. This is a very important place where each of us operates every day. Yes, you can look at the clocks, but that is the one tool that the Speaker has. The disruptions have been coming from all sides of the House today. This is the final question period and it is an important time, but at the same time, we cannot bring it to a level where we're starting to deliver personal attacks on one another, and those are being hurled at each other from both sides of the House.

Member from Burlington?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: In paragraph 15 of his report, the Ombudsman says that Toronto municipal officials didn't inform citizens about the minister's war measure law for the same reason that poor Mr. Vasey didn't comply with the policy requests: "They simply didn't know about it."

Well, the minister was responsible for passing this law. This minister is responsible for embarrassing Toronto municipal officials by keeping the law secret from them. One way or another, this minister is accountable.

I'll ask again: Will you resign and do the right thing?

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's interesting to see the changing views of the Conservative Party on this issue. My good friend the leader of the official opposition wrote an excellent op-ed piece in the"—

Interjection.

Speaker of the House: A final warning to the member from Lanark.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I heard somebody giggle out there. It's not a laughing matter; it's very serious when any member of this House is warned.

Please continue.

Hon. James J. Bradley: My good friend the Leader of the Opposition wrote, I thought, a very informative piece in the Toronto Sun on July 5. Today, he's characterizing the law as a war measure, and he said it's illegal and so on. On that day, in his column, he said, "I believe the public would have understood the necessity of these new powers to contain the violent—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just warned the member from Lanark. I have no choice but to name Randy Hillier, the member of Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Hillier was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And final warning to the Minister of Research and Innovation.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: With all the manufactured rage that I've heard about this today, I read an article in the Globe and Mail on June 29, 2010, on page A13. I guess they're talking about the government. It said, "Finally, they should thank their good fortune for an official opposition that clearly wants no part of the issue for fear of muddying its law-and-order credentials. While the provincial NDP has been vocal, Tim Hudak hasn't touched it—"

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable member that we use titles, notwithstanding quoting.

New question.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier scrambled to distance himself from decisions to pass an illegal and unconstitutional regulation under the Public Works Protection Act. But during the summit, while his secret law was being miscommunicated, he deliberately withheld key facts from the public. The day after the summit, the minister responsible told the press there was "no question" the government did the right thing.

Why should anybody now believe the Premier's contrition?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I read with a good deal of interest the recommendations of the Ombudsman in terms of communication and other matters. The government has already indicated that communication could have been better in this instance.

But what I have undertaken with the Ombudsman—I had an excellent meeting with him where we discussed a number of issues contained in the report. I thought that the recommendations that he made were very helpful to the people of the province of Ontario. On behalf of the government, I gave an undertaking to implement each and every one of those recommendations.

Some of them also deal with what Justice Roy McMurtry will be dealing with as he reviews the Public Works Protection Act to determine what changes should be made or whether the act should be completely changed. I look forward with anticipation to Justice McMurtry's deliberations and the recommendations which will be forthcoming.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Premier: The Premier has a moral and legal obligation to the people of this province. He failed them last June. He's now scrambling to rewrite history, but the facts simply don't change. He passed an unconstitutional and illegal law and deliberately hid the facts from the people. The people of this province can't believe a word that comes out of this Premier's mouth.

If he's not afraid of the truth, why does he not simply call a full public inquiry into the scandal of the G20?

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, I would say that if the law were as the member characterized it, I wondered why in 1990, instead of simply increasing the penalties—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Member from Cambridge. The minister is right beside me, and I'm being challenged to hear him.

Minister, please continue.

1120

Hon. James J. Bradley: Instead of simply increasing the penalties under that law, which your government did as part of a legislative package—instead of replacing it, you simply increased the penalties. So if it were so egregious then, I wonder why you didn't get rid of it.

I would like to note that the NDP, as recently as this week, has called for a federally led inquiry. You should perhaps talk to your federal members.

I notice, as well, that the Canadian Civil Liberties Association welcomed the appointment of Justice McMurtry, but they've also had to say that the G20 was a federal summit hosted by the federal government, policed by a federal security agency and paid for by federal funds. The federal government is therefore best suited to coordinate such an inquiry.

I inform the member that it would be wise for her to consult with her federal—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Since last fall, we've heard members of the opposition party stand here in this House, time and time again, criticizing this government for their lack of attention and action when it comes to jobs and the economy.

Yes, our province, like many other jurisdictions around the world, has felt the negative effects of the most recent global downturn. The people of our province face

some difficult times, and we know that we're not out of the woods yet, but recent reports from Statistics Canada seem to tell a very different story than the opposition is telling. Last month alone, 31,200 new jobs were created in Ontario. Statistics Canada also reported last month that 87% of jobs lost in Ontario during the recession have been recovered. If you compare these numbers with the United States—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm delighted to have this chance to respond to the member who works so hard and tirelessly for Peterborough. It's been wonderful to work with this MPP.

We can see the effects of the Ontario government plan to build jobs and build communities in the city of Peterborough alone, with the great investment by General Electric—one of the world's best companies—landing a greater footprint because of this member's—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Sorry to interrupt, but there is a cross-floor discussion taking place between the government House leader and the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, who, by the way, is not in his seat and should be. I would just encourage these two honourable members, if they want to have this discussion, to please take it out of this chamber so that I can hear the honourable minister.

Minister?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Thank you, Speaker, for that.

Once again, to see the great strides that GE is making in Ontario because of the kind of advocacy by the MPP from Peterborough is heartening. We wish members opposite participated in building Ontario's future.

Our jobs plan, just in the last two weeks alone, has seen the announcement of 2,500 jobs right across Ontario—in Tillsonburg, in Hamilton, in Windsor—

Interjection.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Yes, in Hamilton. The people in the steel industry of Hamilton are delighted by the support and advent of—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final warning to the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Please continue.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: With the advent of Max Aicher from Germany landing in Hamilton, I know the people of Hamilton are delighted by the support of our government for great jobs in Hamilton as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I was indeed working hard yesterday afternoon.

I also want to thank the Minister of Economic Development and Trade for her response. My constituents need to know that this government has a plan for the economy and jobs and that plan is working. The results we've seen over the last weeks speak volumes.

During these difficult times, we can't have our elected representatives engaging in games and stunts. It's an embarrassment.

We know that the opposition doesn't have a plan for jobs and the economy. We know that they're against the many job announcements just highlighted. We know that they're against clean energy investments by international companies in our province and tax cuts for individuals, families and businesses. They're against reducing the regulatory burden for the business community. They're against cutting our hydro bills by 10%. So we can't be sure these things are part of their plan. It's for this reason that I ask the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, what is this government's plan to strengthen Ontario's economy and keep Ontarians and Peterboroughians working?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I do hope that during the holidays the members of the opposition find a plan in their stocking, so that when we come back in the House again in February, they might actually have one.

In the meantime, we're going to continue moving forward to help Ontario families, with things like our clean energy benefit, helping families and small business with a 10% reduction on their electricity bill; things like moving forward with junior kindergarten, building the work-force of the future for Ontario.

Yes, when we go to great cities like Hamilton, we're going to talk about the great advent and future of great cities like Hamilton.

I appreciate the opportunity, and we look forward to your plan. I hope you do lots of work this Christmas. We want a plan.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm going to warn the Minister of Health Promotion about the use of props in the chamber.

Sergeant-at-Arms, will you collect the prop from the Minister of Health Promotion.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): And a final warning to the Minister of Health Promotion.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I can assure the honourable member from Cambridge that if somebody asks for unanimous consent for the House to continue to sit, there will be a no from the Speaker.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. John Yakabuski: The party over there talks about stunts, but they're treating this place like a comedy club. It's disgraceful.

My question is for the Premier. Premier, for two days you have refused to answer any questions with respect to your role in passing your secret, unconstitutional G20 law. You've said it was a failure to communicate, but the Ombudsman caught you in the act, saying keeping it secret was a "conscious decision" by you.

Will you answer why you passed the G20 law and kept it secret, or agree to keep this House in session until you do?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Once again, I say to the member that I've heard the law characterized in a certain way—a very inflammatory way in this particular case.

I want to go back to this column. I think you should actually read the column from July 5. It's a guest columnist; it is Mr. Hudak. I thought it was a very well-written piece. In it, it says this about the law that you're now characterizing as an unconstitutional and illegal war measure: "I believe the public would have understood the necessity of these new powers to contain the violent thugs..."

Obviously, your leader happens to believe that the public would understand that. From that, I draw the conclusion that he agreed with the law that you are now characterizing—perhaps for political reasons; that's not for me to judge. But now you're characterizing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, on November 22, the government House leader moved motion 50 that, if passed, would allow the House to sit next week. The Ontario PC caucus is more than willing to give consent to extend the House sitting in order to get you to finally answer and explain why you passed the illegal G20 law and why you conspired to keep it secret from the general public. Will you either, for the last time, answer the question or instruct your House leader to extend the House sitting until you do?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm going to ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment that he made that was directed at the Premier, making an accusation against him.

1130

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don't know what it was, but I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would say to an honourable member, if they made an unparliamentary comment—

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The only thing I can think of, when you're saying you want to extend the time of the House sitting, is that you may want some time to actually come up with a plan or something like that, and I fully understand that. But I can't believe for a moment that there's anybody sitting on the benches of the Conservative Party today who wants to sit here another week. I just don't believe that.

In terms of the law that you talked about, the article I made reference to in the *Globe and Mail* says, "While the

provincial NDP has been vocal,” Mr. Hudak “hasn’t touched it—the Conservative leader joking about the protests during a speech to party faithful on Monday night, but offering no serious critiques.”

It seems to me that what’s happening is, in one part of the province, they want to be known as pussycats; in the other part of the province, they want to be known as junkyard dogs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I’m going to ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment, please.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would be pleased to withdraw that.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Le 26 mars dernier, le commissaire aux services en français a déposé son rapport final d’enquête au sujet de la plainte des francophones de Peel-Halton sur les services de santé en français. Le rapport dit « que le ministère...propose à la communauté francophone de Peel et Halton des modèles pratiques et concrets de prestations de services...en français et que ces derniers puissent être mis en place avant la fin de l’année 2010 ».

Nous sommes le 9 décembre et il n’y a toujours rien de fait. Pourquoi est-ce que le premier ministre permet qu’on ignore complètement les recommandations de notre commissaire, qu’on les envoie aux oubliettes, que son travail ne compte pas et que ses recommandations ne comptent pas non plus?

L’hon. Dalton McGuinty: Pour la ministre des affaires francophones.

L’hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je suis très heureuse aujourd’hui de me lever en Chambre pour remercier le bon travail que Me François Boileau fait comme commissaire aux services en français. Il est toujours à l’écoute des francophones. On a fait beaucoup d’avancées en francophonie en Ontario grâce au commissaire, qui a été une décision du gouvernement en place.

Je veux vous assurer que cette plainte qui a été faite au commissaire aux services en français du groupe de Peel-Halton, nous la regardons de très près. Nous sommes en train de travailler à une résolution, et très bientôt, la ministre de la Santé pourra annoncer au groupe la bonne nouvelle qui va sûrement les satisfaire.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: De retour au premier ministre. Avec le rapport de Peel et Halton, c’était la première fois que notre commissaire aux services en français émettait une directive avec une date butoir. Notre commissaire se rapporte directement à la ministre déléguée aux services en français, qui aurait dû faire respecter ces directives, mais les faits parlent haut et fort : c’est le 9 décembre, et on n’a toujours rien entendu.

Les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes sont bien contents de la mise en place du commissaire. M^e Boileau est vénéré par la communauté francophone. Mais si le ministre n’écoute pas et ignore le commissaire, bien, tout est foutu.

Est-ce que le premier ministre est prêt à changer les pouvoirs du commissaire afin qu’il se rapporte directement à l’Assemblée législative et qu’ainsi, il soit pris au sérieux?

L’hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Le commissaire aux services en français est pris très au sérieux par ce gouvernement-ci. On a une personne qui est très crédible en place, qui a de grandes qualifications, et oui, c’est vrai qu’il est vénéré par la communauté francophone.

Premièrement, je voudrais féliciter aussi le groupe de Halton-Peel pour le travail qu’ils ont fait pour nous exposer les besoins qu’ils ont en santé en français dans cette région-là. Alors, nous travaillons de très près. Le bureau des services en français et le ministère de la Santé travaillent de très près avec la communauté de Peel-Halton, et nous aurons quelque chose à annoncer très bientôt qui va satisfaire très bien la communauté et aussi le commissaire aux services en français.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Vic Dhillon: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. In October 2007, I stood with the former Minister of Health and members of our Peel caucus and promised my constituents that Peel Memorial Hospital would not be permanently closed. Our government was so committed that we gave Peel Memorial Hospital \$95 million for the redevelopment of this facility.

Minister, my constituents would like to know whether this government is still committed to the redevelopment of Peel Memorial Hospital.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member for Brampton West and to all the members from Brampton for their strong advocacy on improving health care in their communities.

I am very happy to assure the member from Brampton West that we remain fully committed to a viable project to better meet the health care needs of the people of Brampton. There are a number of steps in the planning process. A major project like this does have several stages. As part of stage one of the capital planning process, the William Osler Health System submitted a proposal for redevelopment of the Peel Memorial Hospital site. I’m very pleased to say that the ministry has completed its review of William Osler’s proposal submission and has granted approval to proceed to the next stage. We are committed to continuing the work in partnership with the William Osler Health Centre and the Central West LHIN to make this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you, Minister. I’m pleased that you’ve confirmed our government’s commitment to this project.

I understand the party opposite has only one plan, and that plan is to cut \$3 billion of our health care budget. Minister, can you please tell this House what these cuts would mean to my community?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member from Brampton West is absolutely right: When it comes to health care, the members opposite have only told us one part of their plan, and that's to cut \$3 billion. They've also told us that they're going to silence the local voice in health care planning.

Let me give you one example of the impact of that. When we were elected in 2003, our emergency departments were in fact in crisis. Twenty-two of 25 hospitals in the GTA were closed to ambulances for days on end. The Toronto Star called it the worst ever in the GTA. We've turned that around. We do have a plan. We're repairing the damage that was done and we're moving forward.

When the Tories were in power, they cut funding to William Osler hospital by 8% in just two years. In stark contrast, we've increased funding by 68%. That means better and faster access to care for the people of Brampton—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. For the past three months, I've been campaigning against the closure of medical laboratories in Stayner and Elmvale. In this province there are three companies who have a monopoly on diagnostic testing. One of those is LifeLabs, and, like the others, they rely on taxpayers to stay in business. In fact, we're their only customers.

April Gamache, LifeLabs's vice-president of operations, gave a speech in Atlanta last year on how to find "substantial cost savings" at a conference where the first three words of the flyer read, "Cash is king." Premier, why is your government supporting companies that put cash before patients?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite has raised what I think is a very important issue, and that is the adequacy of the health labs in this province to meet the needs of the people.

We are committed to reducing the incidence of diabetes or at least stopping the increase in diabetes. Part of that means that people have to access lab services more frequently. We are working to resolve the issue of access to lab services. It is something that is very much an issue we are working on.

I think it's important to note that access to labs is part of our health care system. They are private companies that deliver this care, but I think we do have some responsibility to make sure people have access.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Minister, on Friday my office spoke with Monette Greenway, LifeLabs's vice-president of government relations. On the phone, Ms. Greenway confirmed that LifeLabs has no intention of permanently reopening the Stayner laboratory that your government allowed them to close. When we asked about seniors on

fixed incomes who now have to pay \$80 to go from Creemore to Wasaga Beach and back just to get their blood checked, Ms. Greenway said that LifeLabs can't worry about every patient.

1140

Minister, it's about time that your government started dealing with lab companies who understand rural Ontario and care about our constituents. Since LifeLabs is unwilling to commit to keep their Stayner location open on a permanent basis, will you show some leadership and revoke their licence—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Economic Development, final warning.

Please continue.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Minister, will you show some leadership and revoke their licence, take the money you were spending in Stayner and give it to another lab company who will do the job right?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the first answer, this is an issue that is very concerning. It is under active consideration in my ministry right now.

But really, this is the party that really did an excellent job destroying our health care system. When we took office, you couldn't find a family doctor who was taking new patients. When we took office, we had very serious problems around wait-lists. People were waiting two years and longer for access to procedures as simple as cataract surgery or hip replacement surgery.

We have worked very hard to repair the foundation of our health care system. If they have a plan to improve health care by cutting \$3 billion out of it, I want to see that plan. You can't stand on that side of the House and complain about—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

NIAGARA PARKS COMMISSION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The Niagara Parks Commission scandal continues to simmer, and the heat was turned up even higher yesterday when five members of this government voted to keep the scandal under wraps by rejecting the NDP's motion to call in the Auditor General.

If this government is truly concerned about the alleged improprieties at the Niagara Parks Commission, why is it afraid to call in the Auditor General?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Tourism.

Hon. Michael Chan: A decision was made, and we respect the commission's decision. The committee recognizes that we are taking a very responsible approach to bring greater accountability and transparency to the agency.

We have a good plan. We have a strong chair. We have a strong vice-chair. We have an audit process under way to review the commission's travel, meal and hospitality expenses, as well as its procurement activities. We will have a forensic audit in the coming months that will

focus on several aspects of the commission's operation. These actions reflect our government's commitment to openness, transparency and accountability.

We are taking action to restore public confidence and we are taking action to move tourism in the Niagara region forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Even after repeated calls from the public, from the media and from New Democrats to bring in the Auditor General to get to the bottom of the Niagara Parks Commission scandal, this minister insists on burying his head in the sand.

Yesterday, his office stated that they would release a "summary of the government's internal audits." That's about as transparent as the mist coming off Niagara Falls. Since the minister lacks the courage to do the right thing and bring in the Auditor General, will he at least commit today to fully disclosing the results of the government's internal audits as soon as he receives them?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question. We already have internal and external audits in place. There will be a forensic audit in January.

What we see here is a long-standing corporate culture that has existed over many governments, including the one in 1995, when the NDP was in government. However, unlike the NDP, who like to chase allegations, on this side of the House we are committed to taking action and finding solutions.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Tomorrow marks Ontario Human Rights Day, which coincides with International Human Rights Day. All Ontarians have the right to live free from discrimination, inequality and intolerance. Our government stands in defense of Ontarians' human rights as a fundamental principle in this province.

The theme of this year's International Human Rights Day is "human rights defenders who act to end discrimination." Across my riding and in fact across the entire province, there are numerous individuals who work tirelessly every day to ensure that equality and fundamental rights are not only guaranteed but in fact achieved for all.

My constituents have expressed to me their gratitude for the dedicated work of these individuals, and I would like to take this opportunity to express—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member for Scarborough-Rouge River makes a very important point. Tomorrow is International Human Rights Day; it's Ontario Human Rights Day. Human rights and the support for a human rights system characterize this province. It defines the people: born in a café in Dresden, Ontario, when Hugh Burnett demanded to be served; brought in by the Progressive Conservative government of Leslie Frost; supported through governments—Progressive Conservative, NDP, Liberal; supported throughout this province. It consists today of free access to legal advice,

a Human Rights Commission and the ability to have a specialized tribunal deal with the complaints and concerns of Ontarians. It characterizes and defines Ontarians, and we must never let it be challenged or die.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to our group of pages, who have had a great opportunity—

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Applause.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Give them a raise, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The last time they lobbied for that, they got to the Premier, and the Premier and the finance minister made sure that that happened.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to take this opportunity to say that notwithstanding the cut and thrust that exists within this chamber—it is important; it's an important part of our parliamentary democracy. At the same time, we each come here with our own political stripes and our own political philosophy, but when you cut that all away, we are all here for one reason and one reason alone, and that's to represent the people who sent us here.

I would just say to everyone that I want to wish each and every one of you a very merry Christmas. At times, maybe I do get under your skin, as you may get under my skin, but again, that is part of what we have to deal with. I just want to take this opportunity to wish everyone in this House a merry Christmas, happy holidays, all the best for the holiday season. Collectively, let's make sure we do everything that we can to support our agricultural community by buying local, buying Ontario.

Have a great holiday. I'm dead serious about reading O'Brien and Bosc. I think it would be very good for all of you. Have a great holiday season, and we'll see all of you in 2011.

This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JACK DODGE

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise today to pay tribute to the late Jack Dodge, a man whose vision and passion to build things has shaped Brockville and communities beyond. Jack passed away on Sunday at the age of 76.

I was privileged to know both sides of Jack. As a former mayor of Brockville, I respected him as a tough negotiator and no-nonsense businessman. In private, I admired him as a compassionate man who cared deeply for his community and even more for his family.

Brockville has a rich past, featuring many characters who have left a legacy, and Jack Dodge stands firmly amongst the ranks of the most important figures in the city's history. You can't drive anywhere in Brockville without passing a building that Jack built, and you'll know one when you see it, because he built them with class and character and he looked after them.

In the 1960s, he took over Cardinal Construction, a company started by his father in the 1930s. Combining hard work and a razor-sharp mind for business, Jack made the company a powerhouse. The Dodge Group had a hand in just about every major development in Brockville and built hotels and other developments in communities across Ontario.

I offer my sincere condolences to Jack's family. He left an indelible mark on his community as a businessman, but Jack Dodge made an even greater impression as a father and husband.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

Mr. Dave Levac: Speaker, this morning, after question period, you took a moment, in a classy way, to wish us all a merry Christmas. At this time, I would like to echo that, but give you—and I'm sure that I speak on behalf of all of us who are elected members in this House—a Christmas blessing and thanks for the work that you do in our House and around the province.

I also want to say personally to all the elected members, to you and your families, a merry Christmas, happy Hanukkah and all of the season's greetings to you.

I also think that it's important for us to take a moment to acknowledge and recognize all of the people in this building and the buildings surrounding us, who work tirelessly for us behind the scenes: the people who run the page program; the pages themselves; Deb Deller, our Clerk; Todd Decker, our Deputy Clerk; the table itself; Dennis, our Sergeant-at-Arms; Pamela Longhurst, our facility coordinator; legal services; security services; Hansard services; broadcast services; translation services; the clerks of the standing committees and all their support staff; the press gallery; precinct properties—all of those who deserve our best wishes for a great Christmas. To you we say, on behalf of all of the elected members, thank you, God bless you and merry Christmas.

I know it's a prop. I deserve to get thrown out. Please throw me out so I can go home early.

Merry Christmas, everyone.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member does know that is a prop, but the Speaker is feeling mighty fine right now. He's in real good spirits because he's pleased to go home. He's just not looking forward to going home and shovelling about four feet of snow that he understands exists at his house.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. John O'Toole: This past week across my riding, new municipal councillors were sworn into office.

I'd first like to thank the outgoing mayors of the three communities that I serve: Mayor Abernethy from Clarington, Mayor Marilyn Pearce from Port Perry and Scugog township, and Mayor Bob Shepherd from Uxbridge.

I'd like to congratulate the new councils, starting with the regional chair who was elected yesterday, Roger Anderson, on his reappointment as chair of Durham region.

I want to congratulate Mayor Adrian Foster, the new mayor of Clarington; regional councillors Mary Novak and Willie Woo; councillors Joe Neal, Ron Hooper, Corinna Traill and Wendy Partner.

For Scugog, congratulations to the new mayor, Chuck Mercier; Bobbie Drew, regional councillor; and local councillors Larry Corrigan, John Hancock, Jim Howard, Wilma Wotten and Howard Danson.

Finally, Uxbridge: Congratulations to Mayor Gerri Lynn O'Connor, returning; Jack Ballinger, regional councillor; councillors Bev Northeast, Pat Mikuse, Gord Highet, and one of the members of my staff, Jacob Mantle, who was elected and is a young student.

As we move forward into the new year, I look forward to working co-operatively with my council, as well as working to common goals, and I pledge to work with them—goals such as completing the Highway 407 extension as promised, the Darlington new-build nuclear project, the extension of GO trains to Bowmanville, protecting the Oak Ridges moraine and the aquifer it houses, and, finally, working towards creating jobs and building stronger growth plans for the region of Durham.

I pledge to work with the community as well as co-operatively in this Legislature.

CITY OF TORONTO

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I stand today wearing pink as a proud pinko, pro-cyclist Torontonian. I also stand here as claiming that Don Cherry has done a disservice to pit bulls, which this House knows that I've been working hard to protect, by comparing himself to one.

I also stand as a New Democrat who is committed to Transit City, who is committed to seeing it built and, sadly, saw this government not stand up to this administration in the way that they stood up, in a sense, in the past and took \$4 billion out of the budget.

Here's to Transit City. Here's to all the cyclists in Toronto who do the right thing. Here's to all those people who are labelled pinkos. I'm proudly one and certainly would love to see a city where there is transportation for all this winter and on into the spring so that we can get out of our cars, so that we can give the environment a break and so that we can all breathe a little fresher. I hope that would be city council's and this government's gift to Toronto in the next year.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Speaker, with your permission, I would like to speak through you directly to my con-

stituents in Etobicoke North and, as well, invite them to visit my website, shafiqqaadri.com.

I speak to you regarding our values, our medical interests and good governance regarding the Green Energy Act. We have, for example, pledged to reduce dirty coal. As a physician I can tell you that smog days, worsening asthma and hospital admissions because of worsening bronchitis and emphysema are all issues that we're attempting to address.

We as a government, as stewards of our electrical system, had to rescue, rebuild and rehabilitate, and also construct new transmission and generation capacity. Of course, we are also very mindful of conservation and the responsible use of electricity.

As the government, it is our job not only to keep the lights on, not to continue to merely attribute blame, but to accept responsibility. Thus, as I say to my residents in Etobicoke North, we are projecting something on the order of a 3.5% annual increase in hydro rates, but we are mitigating that, softening the blow, by a 10% reduction which kicks in as of January and will continue monthly for the next five years.

This talks to our values of conservation, green energy and a better environment. It's in our medical interest because of the reduction of dirty energy, which of course has deep medical implications. And it is certainly an example of good governance, as stewards of energy and the environmental interests of the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

UNITED WAY OF PEEL REGION

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to commend the work of the United Way of Peel. This organization located in my riding of Mississauga–Brampton South has done commendable work for the community by tackling social issues. The United Way brings people and groups together to work on building healthier communities.

Recently, in partnership with General Mills, 150 cases of food, 42 boxes of toys and 90 boxes of clothing were distributed by the United Way of Peel to the Mississauga Food Bank, the Boys and Girls Clubs' Breakfast for Kids program, and the Peel Multicultural Centre, as well as other notable groups.

I'm proud to say that until December 17, my community office, together with businesses in the riding, will be collecting donations of non-perishable food items and unused toys for infants and teenagers. Together, and in partnership with United Way of Peel, we hope to make this holiday season a healthier and happier season for those in need.

GOOD CITIZENSHIP AWARDS FOR JUNIORS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Today at 6:30 p.m., an important event will take place right in this Legislature. Sixty grade 6 and 7 students will receive the Good Citizenship Award for Juniors.

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Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Wow.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: That's right. These awards were established to dovetail with our Premier's desire to promote civic virtues and positive character traits. We have enthusiastically embraced his leadership in educating our young people to reach their potential.

The primary benchmark for a student's success is self-confidence, as opposed to feeling like a victim. Self-worth is enhanced by recognizing these students as examples for others to emulate.

The students who are receiving awards have demonstrated the following positive character traits: kindness, respect for other people's feelings, being helpful towards younger children and the elderly, and conducting themselves in a responsible fashion towards their teachers, their parents and their peers.

We're happy to announce that this year's students have represented all of these above qualities which we like to see in today's youth. They are truly the role models for their peers. To all of them today, we say congratulations as they come and receive their awards.

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: As we draw close to the end of the year and enter into a period of time just before an election occurs in October 2011, I'd like to ask all members of the Legislature and people outside the Legislature to suggest to their members, what kind of reform can we have to our institution to make it run better in the future? I think we should all put our collective heads together to try to make this place more relevant to our electors and the public.

Mr. Speaker, you have observed, during your period as Speaker, many deficiencies that make it obvious we could do better here. I believe that a lot of the resources, the talent of MPPs in this place is wasted. Most people outside of cabinet really do not have the opportunity to make a positive influence on where our province goes into the future. This is not just the present government where this has happened; this has been a trend which has been occurring over the last 30 years.

I believe that all parliamentarians in this place should bring forward suggestions. We should perhaps have a "non-partisan debate" in the spring to talk about how we could actually share power. We could actually talk about solving problems that have been there for a long period of time and problems which have never been addressed or seem not to be able to be addressed by governments of the day.

I put that out as my wish, as one of the veterans of this place, for my Christmas wish list and my happy new year's list as we go forward.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm pleased to rise in the Legislature to recognize Ontario Human Rights Day, which will be

observed tomorrow, along with International Human Rights Day. It is an important day for the world and for Ontario.

The modern-day notion of human rights was formally established in the aftermath of World War II when the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Proclaimed in 1948, the declaration was the first global expression of the right of all humans to live freely and without discrimination. I'm proud to say that the declaration was drafted by Canadian law professor and human rights expert John Humphrey.

Human Rights Day matters both around the world and here in Ontario. It matters because it reminds us that we must never weaken our resolve when striving to create a just and inclusive world where human rights are nurtured and respected.

In 1962, our province led the way by passing the Ontario Human Rights Code, one of the first laws of its kind in Canada. The code clearly outlines our belief that freedom, justice and peace are built on the inherent dignity and the equal, inalienable rights of every single person.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Ontario Human Rights Code ensure that Ontarians enjoy equality, opportunity and all the rights and freedoms to which they are all entitled. This is the promise Ontario makes to all of its citizens, not only today but for future generations.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

URSULINE RELIGIOUS OF LONDON ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2010

Mr. Hoy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr43, An Act respecting the Ursuline Religious of the Diocese of London in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

1312510 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2010

Mr. Dickson moved first reading of the following bill: Bill Pr45, An Act to revive 1312510 Ontario Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

Hon. Eric Hoskins: This past Sunday marked the 10th anniversary of the international day of the volunteer, a day designated by the United Nations. Its declared aim is a global call to action to thank volunteers for their efforts and to also increase public awareness of their important contributions to society.

We all know that we benefit from the energy, time and leadership of almost eight million volunteers in communities right across this province, and volunteering is one of the best ways to create the world that we want.

Today, I rise in the Legislature to promote the upcoming 25th anniversary of the volunteer service awards, the cornerstone of the government's citizen recognition program. The volunteer service awards honour Ontarians who have helped to build stronger communities throughout our great province. The award celebrates the selfless contributions of Ontarians of all ages and diverse backgrounds who work to improve our quality of life.

Volunteers often work quietly, behind the scenes, and the contributions they make are immeasurable. Whether they are fundraising for a worthy cause, coaching a children's hockey team, helping seniors, mentoring a new Canadian or organizing a charitable event, volunteers play a significant role in building strong, vibrant communities here in Ontario.

Since I became Ontario's Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, I have had the great privilege of travelling across this province to attend volunteer awards ceremonies and to meet numerous volunteers. When I listen to their stories, I am inspired by their spirit of service. It is this spirit that the volunteer service awards celebrate each year.

Volunteers are not people who, by their nature, seek recognition. Rather, volunteers are people who seek to offer themselves, their spirit, their energy and their goodwill to selflessly serve others.

In 2011, the volunteer service awards program will celebrate a remarkable anniversary: the 25th anniversary. Since its inception in 1986, over 150,000 outstanding women, men and youth have been honoured for their outstanding volunteerism.

As we approach the 25th anniversary of the volunteer service awards, I ask all members of the Legislature to encourage their constituents to nominate exceptional volunteers who have demonstrated a steadfast commitment to helping others.

Because of their tireless, selfless efforts, Ontario continues to be the best province in the greatest country in the world.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration for his thoughtful and important words about International Volunteer Day and next year's 25th anniversary of the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards program.

I'm proud to have the opportunity to speak today on behalf of Tim Hudak and the members of the PC caucus about the invaluable roles volunteers play in building stronger, safer and more vibrant communities across Ontario.

As someone active in my community before being elected as MPP in March, I'm well aware of the volunteer service awards program, but I gained a new appreciation for them and the remarkable people they recognize in June, when I had the opportunity of attending my first volunteer awards ceremony as an MPP.

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It was in the city of Kingston, with the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and the Minister of Consumer Affairs. I want to take this opportunity to thank both ministers for the gracious hospitality they afforded me that day.

That award ceremony left an impression on me, and ever since, whenever I speak to the many groups and volunteers in my riding, I make sure to encourage them to nominate someone for these prestigious awards, which have recognized more than 150,000 people from all walks of life since 1986. I join the minister today in asking every member of this House to spread the message when they return to their ridings during the recess. We need to ensure that the 25th volunteer service awards are the most inclusive ever.

Like every MPP, I'm humbled whenever I meet the many selfless folks whose unheralded contributions are the foundation upon which communities are built. We find these giving people everywhere we travel, from rural churches to small-town seniors' centres to soup kitchens or even big-city arenas. They put their own busy lives on hold to perform that most basic act of humanity: helping someone in need. It's frightening to imagine what life in Ontario would be like for even one day without the nearly eight million Ontarians who give over 800 million hours of their time to more than 45,000 organizations. Just think of the good deeds that would go undone and the people who would be left wanting.

We can't ever take these contributions for granted. They are too important to the health and well-being of our communities. That's why the volunteer service award program is so vital. We know volunteers give of their time and money without any expectation of an award; however, when we celebrate and recognize outstanding volunteers, we do more than just say thank you. Highlighting their efforts encourages them to keep up the work, but more importantly, inspires others to get involved.

As always, I want to take just a few moments to talk about my own riding of Leeds-Grenville. In the communities I have the honour of representing, there is an organization that has been matching volunteers with groups, and that is the Volunteer Bureau of Leeds-Grenville. It was founded in 1981 by Betty Haley, who at the time saw the need for organizations to assist them, because they just didn't have time to recruit active volunteers. Thanks to Betty Haley's efforts, the Volun-

teer Bureau of Leeds-Grenville now has 15,000 volunteers making a difference in every corner of my riding. Today the agency is run by executive director Frank Rockett, and it continues to do great work.

I also want to take a moment to discuss my colleague the member for Dufferin-Caledon, Sylvia Jones, and her bill, Bill 38, An Act respecting criminal record checks for volunteers. It would allow volunteers to pay for this record check just once and allow multiple agencies to access the information at no additional cost. It would save money, reduce demand on police resources and encourage people to lend their assistance to multiple agencies.

Again, on behalf of Tim Hudak and the PC caucus, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to Ontario's eight million volunteers. We look forward to joining all members of this House as we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the volunteer service awards program in 2011.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On behalf of Andrea Horwath and the New Democratic Party of Ontario, I'm proud to rise as well to herald the eight million tireless volunteers. But I have to say that some of those volunteers are becoming very, very tired these days. I was there to serve the millionth meal with St. Francis Table in my own riding. They weren't happy about it. They weren't celebrating anything. They were serving the millionth meal, sadly.

Churches, mosques, synagogues and temples are going where governments fear to tread these days. They're going out in their communities. They're feeding people; they're housing people; they're working overtime. The Out of the Cold program itself is running out of volunteers because they're so exhausted at doing work that shouldn't be theirs to do; it should be the government's place to do it.

I want to also herald, particularly in light of the Ombudsman's report, the work of our tireless social justice activists. Tomorrow, as you heard the member from Eglinton-Lawrence say, is Human Rights Day.

There are tireless volunteers who work for human rights. For example, tonight I'm going to The 519 on Church Street to stand with my trans brothers and sisters, who would love to see Toby's Act passed, which would add gender identity to the Ontario Human Rights Code. They have been working tirelessly to see this done both federally and provincially for many years now, and they're not getting paid for it; they're doing it because it's the right thing to do.

I think of all of those tireless volunteers who were out demonstrating the weekend of the G20, many of whom were, for their troubles, arrested, beaten and imprisoned for no fault of their own but because they are tireless volunteers. They are people who give of themselves with no recompense. I personally was out there with, for example, the Tibetan community in my community, who are still calling for a free, autonomous and independent Tibet. I was out there with prayer leaders and clergy of all stripes who were pushed back from doing a prayer service for absolutely no reason except for an unjust law,

passed unjustly, as we now know. These are also tireless volunteers.

Yesterday, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses came to Queen's Park. They came with a list of demands for women—the most vulnerable women and children—who are being abused, in record numbers, I must say. They are the ones who step up, many of them volunteers, and look after these women and children. But they are tired. The tireless volunteers are getting tired. They need government help. They need housing. They need a poverty program with some teeth that actually addresses poverty, not just talks about it. They need help doing the work that is absolutely essential.

I haven't even touched on the volunteers in our schools, the volunteers in our hospitals, the volunteers across this province who keep the province functioning. Were they to cease their tireless efforts for a moment, this province would cease to function. They sent me here. They elected me to come here with that very message. The very reason I ran was about poverty issues. The very reason I'm here is because I was one of them and I got tired. They elected me to come here to talk on their behalf and speak to a government that seems to have dropped the ball where volunteer and volunteer efforts are concerned.

So from them to you, by way of a Christmas card, I guess, because it is that season when we're supposed to look after others. They say they are looking after others. They're doing their best, all eight million of them, but they're running out of resources and they're getting exhausted. They very much wish to pass the torch back to government to pick up the mantle and to do what government should be doing: looking after its citizens, taking care of each other, housing people, feeding people, educating people, healing people. That shouldn't have to be the work only of volunteers. That should rightfully be the work of government.

So on their behalf, a great deal of gratitude is owed, no doubt, and a great deal of help needs to be forthcoming as well.

Merry Christmas and, to all, a good night.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: I have a petition to save medical laboratory services in Stayner.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller

hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians."

I agree with the petition and I will sign it.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas there are over 7,000 people with disabilities waiting for the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services' special services at home (SSAH) funding and almost 4,000 on wait-lists for Passport funding; and

"Whereas such programs are vital and essential to supporting Ontarians with developmental disabilities, and their families, to participate in community life;

"ARCH Disability Law Centre supported by Family Alliance Ontario, People First of Ontario, Community Living Ontario, Special Services at Home Provincial Coalition, Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario and the undersigned individuals and organizations urge the Ontario government to take quick action to substantially improve developmental services.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"1. Ensure that all qualified Passport and SSAH applicants immediately receive adequate funding;

"2. Make the application and funding allocation processes transparent; and

"3. Ensure that sufficient long-term funding is in place so that eligible Ontarians with disabilities can access the supports and services they need."

I'm in agreement. I will send it with page Kyle.

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MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS TREATMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of people suffer from multiple sclerosis;

"Whereas there is a treatment for chronic cerebrospinal venous insufficiency, more commonly called CCSVI, which consists of a corrective angioplasty, a well-known and universally accepted "procedure that is low-risk and at relatively low expense;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Health agrees to proceed with clinical trials of the venoplasty treatment to fully explore its potential to bring relief to the thousands of Ontarians afflicted with multiple sclerosis."

I will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Justin.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government" has made "positron emission tomography, PET scanning, a publicly insured health service...; and

"Whereas" since "October 2009, insured PET scans" have been "performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens" of the northeast."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Breana to bring it to the Clerk.

HOME CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition I've received from a Mr. William Diaz. It's addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and the minister responsible for seniors. It reads as follows:

"Whereas seniors who are disabled and/or ill are presently suffering at home; and

"Whereas the cost of a caregiver on a monthly basis who looks after a senior in their own home is around \$1,200, including room and board; and

"Whereas the cost of taking care of someone at home is at least 10 times less than the cost of a hospital bed; and

"Whereas most seniors with disabilities and/or illness are crowding an already overburdened health care system;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly request that a basic government subsidy be established (based on a doctor's evaluation) which will pay at least a minimum allowance for a caregiver.

"Seniors deserve to live at home as long and as independently as possible."

Since I agree, I am delighted to sign this petition.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: This petition was sent to me by Focus Elmvale. It's to deal with the closed laboratory in Elmvale:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the consolidation of medical laboratories in rural areas is causing people to travel further and wait longer for services; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of the Ontario government to ensure that Ontarians have equal access to all health care services; and

"Whereas rural Ontario continues to get shortchanged when it comes to health care: doctor shortages, smaller hospitals, less pharmaceutical services, lack of transportation and now medical laboratory services; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to increase taxes to make up for misspent tax dollars, collecting \$15 billion over the last six years from the Liberal health tax, ultimately forcing Ontarians to pay more while receiving less;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government stop the erosion of public health care services and ensure equal access to medical laboratories for all Ontarians," including people in Elmvale.

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that Dalton McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax."

I do agree and give it to this fabulous page, Joshua, to be delivered to the table. By the way, all the pages are fabulous. Merry Christmas.

RAIL LINE EXPANSION

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition addressed to the Parliament of Ontario—a number delivered to me by Shelley Burgoine, Andrew Bartucci, Megan Vickell, Andrea DeRubis and Katie Thomas. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Metrolinx, an agency of the government of Ontario, is planning an eightfold expansion in diesel rail traffic from 50 trains per day to over 400 trains per day in the Georgetown corridor, which cuts through west-end neighbourhoods including Liberty Village, Parkdale, Roncesvalles, the Junction and Weston; and

"Whereas this expansion will make this the busiest diesel rail corridor on the planet; and

"Whereas exhaust from diesel locomotives is a known danger to public health, linked to cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, cancers and premature death; and

"Whereas diesel exhaust poses an especially potent danger to children and the elderly; and

"Whereas diesel trains are harmful to the environment and contribute to climate change and are also heavy, loud and disruptive to neighbourhoods and local quality of life; and

"Whereas over 250,000 people live within one kilometre of this line and 30,000 children attend one of more than 200 schools within one kilometre of the tracks;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge our leaders to act now to ensure that the rail expansion in the Georgetown south rail corridor, including the air-rail link, be electrified from the outset and that there be no further expenditure on diesel technology."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and ask page Sarah from the good riding of Newmarket-Aurora to deliver it to the table.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Hanmer in the riding of Nickel Belt.

"Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: 97% of collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

"Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

"Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

"Therefore we ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Elizabeth to bring it to the clerks.

RAIL LINE EXPANSION

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a petition addressed to the assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Metrolinx, an agency of the government of Ontario, is planning an eightfold expansion in diesel rail traffic from 50 trains per day to over 400 trains per day in the Georgetown corridor, which cuts through west-end neighbourhoods including Liberty Village, Parkdale, Roncesvalles, the Junction and Weston; and

"Whereas this expansion will make this the busiest diesel rail corridor on the planet; and

"Whereas exhaust from diesel locomotives is a known danger to public health, linked to cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, cancers and premature death; and

"Whereas diesel exhaust poses an especially potent danger to children and the elderly; and

"Whereas diesel trains are harmful to the environment and contribute to climate change and are also heavy, loud and disruptive to neighbourhoods and local quality of life; and

"Whereas over 250,000 people live within one kilometre of this line and 30,000 children attend one of more than 200 schools within one kilometre of the tracks;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge the Legislature of Ontario to take action with respect to the immediate electrification of the Georgetown south rail corridor, including the air-rail link, and the cessation of any further investment in diesel technology or diesel infrastructure."

I'm sending this petition to you, Mr. Speaker, through Alexandra, our page.

PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here. It was sent to me from the good folks at Community Living Tillsonburg. It has been in delivery mode for some period of time, as the bill has already been dealt with, but on their behalf I do want to read it into the record. It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the picketing of the homes of people with intellectual disabilities alienates people from their autonomy; security; privacy; relationships with staff, neighbours and community; and also causes discrimination and harm to citizens who should be free to enjoy their homes without harassment and intimidation;

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"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support Bill 83 and prohibit the picketing of vulnerable people's residences during a strike."

I thank you very much for allowing me to present it on their behalf.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Mr. Peter Tabuns: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations etc.;

"Whereas often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Tarion Warranty Corp., they encounter an unwieldy bureaucratic system that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

"Whereas the Tarion Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

"Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Tarion agency truly accountable to consumers;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support MPP Cheri DiNovo's private member's bill, which calls for

the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Tarion and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman's powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act."

I support this petition. I will affix my signature and give it to Jake for delivery to the desk.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present another petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas industrial wind turbine developments have raised concerns among citizens over health, safety and property values;

"Whereas the Green Energy Act allows wind turbine developments to bypass meaningful public input and municipal approvals;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment revise the Green Energy Act to allow full public input and municipal approvals on all industrial wind farm developments and that a moratorium on wind development be declared until an independent, epidemiological study is completed into the health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines."

I present this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. I sign it and present it to page Kyle on his last day.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Toby Barrett: "Whereas the residents of Ontario feel that this current Liberal government is directly responsible for their rising household debt by slapping them with higher taxes, such as the health tax and the HST, higher fees, higher hydro bills and higher auto insurance premiums; and

"Whereas the people have lost faith in their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government immediately resign and call an election."

I agree—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member for Nickel Belt.

HYDRO RATES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this very short petition from the people of Sarnia:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that Premier McGuinty immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax (HST)."

I support this petition, and I would ask the excellent page Joshua to bring it to the Clerk.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

ORGANIC WASTE DIVERSION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE RÉACHEMINEMENT DES DÉCHETS ORGANIQUES

Mr. Sterling moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 146, An Act to ban organic waste from landfill sites / Projet de loi 146, Loi visant à interdire l'enfouissement des déchets organiques.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Bill 146 is an attempt to deal with a long-standing problem that we seem to have here in the province of Ontario, and that is dealing with non-toxic, non-hazardous waste. It was a coincidence that the day on which I introduced this Bill 146—Monday, December 6, this week—the Auditor General undertook in his annual report a study of waste disposal in our province. I want to thank the Auditor General, Jim McCarter, for releasing his report. He points out that Ontario produces approximately 12.5 million tonnes of non-hazardous waste each year. Approximately one third of that, or four million tonnes, is organic waste. While there is a requirement that municipalities and populations with more than 50,000 collect yard waste, there's no requirement that any municipality collect other kinds of organic waste, such as food waste.

About 40% of Ontario households have access through their municipalities to participate in an organic waste diversion program. On the other hand, the ICI sector—industry, commercial and institutions—which produces 60% of all the waste or garbage that goes to our landfills, does not participate in dealing with diversion; I mean, they don't participate very well. In fact, what is happening with their 60% of the pie is that they're only diverting 12%. Municipalities have been much more successful, in that they have now got to diversion rates, on average, of about 40%. The Ontario government, with its policies, has only been able to reach a diversion rate of 24% overall.

So we have some participation, and some increasing participation, by municipalities dealing with diversion of waste, and we have an ICI sector at a mere 12%. In fact, their diversion rate five years ago, eight years ago, 10

years ago was higher than 12%; so the ICI sector—industry, commercial, institutional—is getting worse than they were before about garbage and trying to divert it away from landfills.

Bill 146 attempts to address that problem by dealing with the fact that 30% of all waste that goes into landfills is organic in nature, and that not only includes things like leaf waste but anything that has a sort of vegetation base: anything that is wood, anything that is foodstuffs, that kind of thing. What Bill 146 says is that three years after the day this legislation is passed, no landfill could accept organic waste from that day on.

The date for implementation of the bill is postponed so that during the three-year span, industry and municipalities could respond by setting up the necessary technology and plants to actually deal with organic waste. I believe we now have four different plants in the province of Ontario that deal with organic waste. Perhaps it's even more than that—sorry, I know of at least five different plants that do that.

In order to get to a situation where not only municipalities will be diverting organic waste from their landfills, or landfills in general, but more importantly, three years after this bill comes into place, the ICI sector could no longer deposit organic waste in a landfill, we would require, first of all, the municipal sector, two and a half years after the bill is passed, to come up with a plan as to how they're going to collect waste and how they could separate that waste, send the organic waste one way and what remains another way, whether to a landfill or preferably to some other kind of diversion: recycling, maybe energy from waste or whatever. So the bill talks to that plan.

1350

The bill also includes the ability of the government to say to smaller municipalities, "Look, some of this kind of planning etc. requires more than perhaps a small municipality can put together." It gives the province the power to say to municipalities, "We want you to put your plans together with some of the other municipalities that are in and around you." That may be controversial for some municipal governments. I understand that. We've been talking for a long time in this province about having joint waste management areas. It was tried in the early 1990s, in terms of locating landfill sites. It did not work at that time. But I believe that with the proper incentives through the provincial government, joint waste management areas can actually be very, very good for dealing with our solid waste, because in a lot of cases there's just not enough volume in the smaller communities to undertake a sophisticated way of dealing with that waste. That is another part of this particular bill.

As well, the bill says that after the time comes to deal with this matter by municipalities, each resident would have to put out the other waste, not the organic waste, in clear bags so that when the collector came around to their place, they could actually determine whether organic waste remained in that bag or not.

These are sort of the main sections to the bill which people would be interested in.

Of course, I'm quite willing to listen, to debate, to change and that kind of thing as we go forward. If there is a better plan and better way to do it, I'm entirely open to that kind of a discussion as well. The long and the short of it is that we must do something in this regard.

You might say, "Why are you, the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills, dealing with this issue at this time?" I want to put it in a local perspective.

I represent the west end of the city of Ottawa. I have a fairly large geographic area, but most of the population is of urban nature and is located in two main townsite areas, one being the city of Kanata, which has 70,000 to 80,000 people, and the other being the former town of Stittsville. Both places were originally outside of the city of Ottawa but now are, in fact, the west end of the city of Ottawa. The Carp landfill site, which is located very near the town of Stittsville now, was originally a landfill site out in the middle of the country. It was way, way out there. It was first created around 1970 and has had huge amounts of waste deposited there. In fact, it's called the Carp mountain at this time. Unfortunately, it's located right beside the Queensway and is at the western gateway to the capital of our country. This particular landfill site is owned by a waste management company, and they are seeking a huge expansion of that site. They want to pile yet more garbage into this area.

In the interim, from 1970 to now, Stittsville went from being a town of 2,000 people to being a town of 26,000 people, and the plan is that probably within a 10- to 15-year period, it will have a populace of 50,000 to 55,000 people in this area. This landfill site is located right where you get off the Queensway. Every Stittsville resident, as they go home after work, if they work in downtown Ottawa, will virtually pass this landfill site as they go to their home.

In the past, they've had to put up with significant odour problems in their backyards. Many of them, two or three years ago, could not go out into their backyard and enjoy it in the summer evening because of the stench from the landfill site.

Notwithstanding the assurances of the waste management corporation, the people in that area say, "We have done our part. We have accepted waste from all over eastern Ontario. We've accepted waste from the other parts of the city of Ottawa. We have the equivalent in each and every one of our backyards of 30,000 bags of garbage," if you wanted to split it between each of the residents who live within a four-kilometre area of that landfill waste site.

My impetus, one of my reasons for bringing forward this bill is, let's find alternative solutions to landfill sites. We've got to get off the pot and do what we can in order to assure future communities that this is not going to happen to them, that it will not be necessary to expand and expand landfills as we go forward. Let's get on the diversion train. Let's fix a serious problem that we have in here in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's certainly a pleasure to rise in the House and support Bill 146, An Act to ban organic waste from landfill sites. I really want to commend the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills in bringing this forward and also his sense of the urgency of the need to do something about this particular issue.

I'm sure the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills does not remember when we first met, but I remember the incident quite vividly. He was Minister of the Environment, it was 1999 and he was introducing the Drive Clean program up in Newmarket in the presence of the member who is now the member for Newmarket–Aurora, then the member for York–Mackenzie. I know I was actually quite surprised at the time that such progressive legislation was being brought in by that government, but certainly the Drive Clean program has shown, through its mandatory vehicle emissions inspection and maintenance program, that it has reduced pollutants, including greenhouse gases. I know that as the medical officer of health for the region at that time, I was certainly very much in favour of that legislation.

So it's certainly good to see that there are some progressive members of the Conservative caucus here in the House at this time with the introduction of this particular bill.

Waste diversion is certainly something that's a key strategy and part of our government's approach. We know that the more waste we keep out of our landfills today, the cleaner and greener Ontario will be. Of course, this is so important not only for our children but our grandchildren and future generations.

And protecting the environment is good for business. Our diversion efforts contribute some \$673 million to our economy and create more than seven full-time jobs for every 1,000 tonnes diverted. We've been working hard to increase diversion, and we're certainly seeing progress overall in the residential waste diversion, where we have increased such diversion from 38% in 2006 to 44% in 2009. We are diverting nearly three million tonnes of waste from our landfills each and every year. Someone's calculated that that's enough to fill more than five Roger's Centres, and we are therefore stopping 2.2 million tonnes of greenhouse gases from being released.

Our diversion programs are some of the broadest in North America, including the highly successful blue box program. Of course, we have programs for waste electronics, used tires and hazardous waste. However, as the member is focusing particularly on organic materials, we need to recognize that one in every three tonnes of waste does consist of organic materials. We have a major opportunity, through composting, to increase waste diversion. This in fact is working across the province. Between 2007 and 2008, the amount of compost diverted from landfill increased 20% and more than 800,000 tonnes have been diverted since the project started.

1400

In larger municipalities, of course, we do have curb-side organics collection. In 2009, there were more than 2.2 million households that had access to this type of

collection. The amount of green bin waste collected increased from approximately 250,000 tonnes in 2007 to 350,000 tonnes in 2009 alone. We certainly have proposed improvements to our compost framework so we can divert even more types of organic materials while supporting the growth of the organic waste diversion industry.

In recent years, most large municipalities have voluntarily established household organics programs to divert food waste, contributing to an increase in the provincial organics diversion rate. Clearly, the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills wants to ensure that smaller municipalities get on this bandwagon as well.

I want to just take a minute or so to brag about what York region has done. My riding of Oak Ridges–Markham consists of some four municipalities. The region of York has a total of nine local municipalities. In 2005, the region and the nine local municipalities partnered to form the intermunicipal waste diversion committee—the type of committee the member is talking about.

They've done an excellent job in taking the initiative to divert organic waste from landfills, so that in 2005 the municipalities in York region were diverting approximately 34% of curbside-collected waste from disposal. As of 2008, York region was diverting 66% of waste from landfill sites. Through working together, the area municipalities showed a really substantial increase in what they were able to do. Specifically, in 2008, York region's organics program collected 86,300 tonnes of organic material through the green bin program and in the same year, 2008, almost 500,000 tonnes of leaf, yard and wood waste were composted, and that was a 19% increase just in one year. I want to commend the region of York for what they've done and I certainly think that there's an opportunity for smaller municipalities to follow this lead.

I will certainly support this bill. It needs to go to committee. There are many aspects, of course, within the bill that need further consideration and discussion, but I can say with all confidence that this bill is certainly extending the direction our government is going in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly very pleased to join the debate on Bill 146, An Act to ban organic waste from landfill sites, which has been introduced by my colleague the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, who served this Legislature as Minister of the Environment. I can certainly personally attest he did an outstanding job at the time.

I appreciate that he has brought this bill forward. It would require that all organic waste be disposed of in regulated composting sites and it would require all municipalities of over 5,000 people to submit an annual report to the Ministry of the Environment detailing their progress made towards compliance with these requirements.

I can certainly say with confidence that I will be supporting this bill, which I believe provides a very import-

ant step toward reducing the amount of waste that goes into landfills. As the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills indicated, there are certainly problems in his community. I would indicate to you that in Waterloo, if you live on the west side near the landfill site, there are certain times of the year that we have odour as well, and certainly, I hear the complaints. Whatever we can do to reduce the amount of waste we obviously need to undertake.

I appreciate that the bill he has brought forward provides a very clear articulation of the requirement that organic waste not only from residential but also from industrial, commercial and institutional sectors must be diverted from landfills and redirected to composting sites. We've certainly heard that the percentage going in is not what it should be.

It also provides a concrete mechanism for tracking whether the requirements outlined in the bill have been successfully achieved by the municipalities. It is realistic, it's reasonable and it provides the municipalities with an amount of time to establish the necessary waste diversion and composting infrastructure before they are required to report back to the ministry about the progress they have made.

By banning organic waste from landfill sites, this bill creates an impetus—and this is absolutely necessary—for municipalities to develop that necessary infrastructure to process the organic waste, which in turn will have a positive impact on local economies. So this bill that has been introduced by my colleague will ultimately reduce the amount of waste going to landfills.

This is an important aim, given that as of 2008, the remaining capacity in the 32 largest landfills in Ontario was expected to last approximately 25 years at the then current fill rate. However, Ontario municipalities will no longer be able to ship their waste after 2010. So we need to take a look at what is happening here. If it's not going to the United States, we are going to exhaust the landfill capacity sooner than the estimated 25 years and we need to find alternatives.

Given that the Ministry of the Environment's priority is to reduce waste generation and divert as much waste as possible from disposal by supporting initiatives that accomplish this in a safe and environmentally responsible manner, I would say that the measures to ban organic waste from landfill sites proposed by this member's bill complement the aims very well. So I congratulate my colleague. Obviously we need to take action.

We have on the books a Waste Diversion Act, the sole purpose of which is "to promote the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and to provide for the development, implementation and operation of waste diversion programs." However, we did not achieve the waste diversion rate of 60% by 2008 that was committed to by the McGuinty government in 2004. Today we are only at 24% of that 60%. Clearly the mechanisms in place are not working. We need to do more. For this reason, I will support this bill; I know my constituents do as well. I congratulate my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to support the bill brought forward today by the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills.

He touched on some realities when he introduced the bill. The report from the Auditor General yesterday was indeed extraordinarily timely. I just want to note: "Only about 15% of Ontario's municipalities have instituted an organic waste composting program, which, in total, collect from about 40% of the province's households." The Auditor General has determined very clearly—no need to argue—that the amount we actually process and deal with is extraordinarily small; very small.

He notes that the institutional, commercial and industrial sector generates about 60% of the waste in Ontario but only manages to divert about 12% of it. Again, a very small percentage of the waste generated is actually diverted—actually dealt with in the way it needs to be dealt with: "Organic waste generated by both the residential and IC&I sectors represents almost one third of the total waste generated in Ontario, but there is no province-wide organic waste diversion program or target, despite the ministry's having considered establishing a program as early as 2002."

The member is doing the work that needs to be done, and frankly should have been done, by the government. They have been in power for seven years. They've understood the necessity for diversion, and they've brought forward white papers on diversion, but we sit in this chamber today with those goals, those directions, ignored. I appreciate the fact that the member has brought forward the bill. What I regret is that the government did not bring forward a similar bill years ago and put in place the mechanisms, the funding and the regulatory framework to actually make things happen.

A last point from the Auditor General: "One in five municipalities that responded to our survey felt that they had insufficient landfill ... capacity for their residential waste." So we have a situation in which municipalities are going to face the great difficulty in finding a spot or a process to deal with their waste, where the targets the province has talked about are not being met, where in fact the need to take environmental action has not happened, so it is left to this member to bring forward a bill.

1410

There are a few things that I want to touch on in support of this bill, and the first is that landfills leak—the simple reality. You put material into a landfill, you put organics into a landfill, you put toxic material into a landfill, and you can expect that leakage will happen. The Richmond landfill near Napanee leaks about 16 million litres of leachate per annum. What this bill would do would be to take out a significant part of the waste stream that contributes to that leachate. It would increase the ability for those landfills to be stabilized, so that leakage would be minimized, so that our groundwater would be protected. For that reason alone, this bill would be worthwhile.

There is no question that when you look at the reports from the various bodies that address us here in the Legislature—the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario says that leachate leaking from landfills around Ontario continues to be a problem, and one that for the most part is not monitored. When you understand that, you see again why it makes sense for us to take the action to actually divert this organic waste—reusable, valuable organic waste—from landfill.

There are local problems that arise when you don't deal with this organic waste. There are problems of odour, obviously. For anyone who has to deal with a landfill in their riding or in their community, they know that the odour problem is a huge one. I had an opportunity once to talk to a solicitor for the city of Toronto who had been sent up to the Keele Valley landfill to deal with complaints that residents had. He was taken by them to stand on the edge of that landfill. He had seen the reports from his works department saying that there was not an odour. Very directly, in language he didn't usually use in the council chambers, he indicated to me the quality and the strength of that odour and the fact that he could not deny what the residents were pointing out. So a bill that will deal with odour and leachate makes a lot of sense.

I've talked about the local problems. There are global problems. We have a situation now where when organic material is put into a landfill, it is a significant source of methane, natural gas, a very powerful greenhouse gas. If the government were to adopt this private member's bill and put it in place, we would have significant impact on the greenhouse gases that come out of Ontario. That is a good reason to support this bill.

Those in this chamber who represent agricultural areas know that we have an ongoing problem with soil erosion. When you talk to people who assess the productivity of agriculture around the world, they say that there is a substantial problem with loss of soil. Currently, here, we take that organic material that can replenish the soil and generally bury it in conditions that worsen the greenhouse problems. In some instances, it's burned. In both instances, material that could be used to address a large environmental and agricultural problem, replenishment of the soil, is ignored.

We are consuming the natural world faster than it can replenish itself. A number of years ago, it was the World Wildlife Fund that estimated, I think, as high as 30%—we're consuming natural resources at a rate 30% greater than they can be renewed, using up our stocks of fish much faster than they can be renewed, taking the nutrients out of the ground and thus the soil out of the farms at rates faster than they can be renewed. We have substantial problems here, and turning that around, making sure that that usable waste is properly used, restored, used to rebuild our soil, and not put in a position where it causes contamination of groundwater, not put in a position where it creates odour, is an advance.

I know, because it's a private member's bill, that you can't put everything in there, but we have to recognize

that for this bill to actually deliver the goods, it would have to be able to exist within a larger regulatory framework of making sure that the stream of waste was checked and screened. We would have to make sure there were funds allocated to municipalities so they could deal with the cost of composting.

There's no question in my mind, and I don't think there's a question in the minds of anyone here, that municipalities face severe financial constraints. Early on, when I came to this Legislature, I was asked to put a question to the Minister of the Environment of the day about Guelph and its composting centre. Guelph was in a situation where it could not pay to keep its composting operation going, and it needed support from this province. It did not get that support, and as of today, that facility is out of operation, one that actually had an extraordinarily good record for producing high-quality, clean composted material that could be used on farmers' fields and in gardens.

When we debate this bill, we need to keep in mind all those elements—the advantage in terms of local environment, the advantage in terms of the global environment—and we need to keep in mind the necessity to go beyond the bill and put in place those regulatory and financial frameworks to allow municipalities to actually deliver as they will be required to deliver.

My hope is that every member who's in this chamber today will vote for this bill. My hope is that it will be useful in sparking a larger debate about how we deal with waste in this province and where we have to go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted to stand up and speak in support of this initiative. I think the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills brings to us a very important subject to be debated.

But before I go at full speed in support, I hope we engage the municipalities in our initiative, because it's important, because it will cost some extra expenses to the municipalities, whatever we do, whatever law we pass in this place. But it's an incredible initiative; it's an incredible proposal.

I come from a city called London, Ontario. Everybody knows London, especially since it has become famous after all the snow we got for the last three or four days. We have very important companies and facilities in the city of London, like TRY Recycling. They recycle almost 95% to 97% from all industrial material and send it back to the community to be reused again and again. Many members of this House went to London and visited those facilities. We have one in the north and one in the south end of the city of London.

Also, we have a unique company called Orgaworld. They're open also in the south of London. They deal with organic materials. I had the chance three weeks ago to visit this facility, this company. They do an excellent job by taking all the organic materials from many different cities, especially Toronto and York, and then turning it into composting material, and they sell it back to the

farmers. All these materials of many different substances will help the farmers to double their crops.

I think it's important to take all these elements from our landfills, since we can use them again and again to enrich our land and our farming land.

At this company, when I went to see it, I saw a lot of different products coming from different parts of the province, as I mentioned, like meat, leaves and vegetables and many different organic products. They go to this facility. They have a special way to deal with it.

The member from Toronto—Danforth mentioned about the odours coming from those facilities. We had the same problem in London, but the company, Orgaworld, acted professionally and enhanced their facility, trying to contain those odours and also please, hopefully, all the communities and the people who live around them.

I think the member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills brings a very important issue to us to be debated, and I support the member. Hopefully, he will win his nomination. I'm not sure why his party is running people against him. He is a good member and he has a lot of experience, so hopefully he will be able to win his nomination and then come back as a member, because he brings a lot of sense to the House. I support his initiative.

1420

I've been asked by my colleague Donna Cansfield to get the chance to speak on this bill because she believes it's important. When she was the Minister of Natural Resources, she had the privilege and honour to visit London, Ontario, to visit those facilities. She knows how important it is for our community, for our municipalities and for our environment to be protected in the future, and also because we believe—I believe strongly—we are temporary stewards of the land. We have to pass it on in good shape for the next generations. Hopefully, my colleague will have the chance to speak in support of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I want to thank my colleague from Carleton—Mississippi Mills—as we know, a former Minister of the Environment—for bringing forward Bill 146 to ban organic waste from landfills. I appreciate the comments from another former Minister of the Environment, our member for Kitchener—Waterloo.

Given the impending crisis brought on by stagnant waste diversion rates and landfill capacity shortages, this Organic Waste Diversion Act represents, in my view, a very important step back from the brink. There's no doubt that it's a double-edged sword. Waste diversion and landfill management under Mr. McGuinty have been an abysmal failure.

It was April 5, 2004, when then-Liberal Environment Minister Dombrowsky announced her 60% waste diversion reduction, to be filled by 2005. She later amended that to 2008. It's now 2010, and according to the Auditor General, Ontario's waste diversion rate is not 60%, it's not 50%—it's less than half. It's 24%, and that's a dismal figure. This is a government that seemed

to make promises and then just kind of leave them in a bag by the curb, from what I can tell.

With respect to Mr. Sterling—33 years, nine terms in this Legislature—Mr. Sterling has served in nine cabinet portfolios. I can't name all of them. I know it was transportation at one time, intergovernmental affairs, the ambassador that he is, government House leader, Minister of the Environment and Energy. Under Bill Davis, he was Minister of Resources Development and he was Minister of Justice. This is the member who brought in the Drive Clean program and made it work, a very practical program. I recognize the agreement across the way. He is very action-oriented, given his background in engineering and his background in law. Ignition interlock is another system that we attribute to former Minister Sterling.

As far as diversion, it was just a month ago that we learned that Ontario's electronics recycling program was collecting \$44 million in eco taxes every year. Guess what? They were achieving 2% of their recycling targets: \$44 million and you get a 2% return. That's a 98% failure. That is abysmal in my view.

This September, the annual report of the Environmental Commissioner, Gord Miller, indicated that the landfill inventory monitoring system contains information on only 32 landfills. That's out of 1,157 active landfills that are identified by the environment ministry, and I know I could identify a number of other landfills that would not be on that registry.

Again, consider the Ontario Waste Management Association, who five years ago told us, "The overall disposal capacity of Ontario landfills has been in decline for many years. Capacity consumption has outpaced the approval of new capacity." And the equation is not getting any better. The Auditor General addressed this very recently—earlier this week—and he noted, "One in five municipalities that responded to our survey felt they had insufficient landfill capacity for their residential waste. The existing capacity will diminish more rapidly once export of residential waste to Michigan largely ends" by this year. That's "an additional million tonnes of household waste previously shipped" south to Detroit that will be "deposited in Ontario landfills each year." That's starting in a couple of weeks from now.

These are the warning signs. The Auditor General, the environment commissioner, the Ontario Waste Management Association, Ontario municipalities—the concerns are there for landfill space in a number of locations, certainly in eastern Ontario and certainly in my riding. I think of the Edwards landfill expansion that's an ongoing battle down in Cayuga. I've come into this House with 1,400 signatures from people in my area wanting to stop Toronto garbage from being shipped to Haldimand county. This was a petition titled Halt Edwards Landfill Excavation. The line of reasoning at that time, using this government's Adams Mine Lake Act, was that the excavation was 15 acres in a wetland-slough forest area—a 29-foot excavation. By this government's definition that would be a lake, and this government passed a law to prevent garbage from being dumped in lakes.

So it's important, in my view, to seriously consider this Organic Waste Diversion Act. It's a direction that will ease some of the pressure that's building towards the very real possibility of a garbage crisis in Ontario. Thank God for the Detroit area for taking our garbage.

As we were told earlier, organic waste makes up a third of the total waste generated in Ontario. Some municipalities do offer programs for organics, but only 40% of households have access to organic waste diversion. What this bill would do is ensure that that access is available across the province of Ontario.

This government has to get a handle on this. An organics ban, as proposed in this legislation, would ease that pressure on landfills and actually give us some breathing time until a Tim Hudak government can restore some sense of sanity with respect to provincial waste diversion.

I'll just echo the comments of Gord Miller again. This was in 2008: "Ontario lacks an overarching provincial policy for waste management that would set out capacity needs, technology preferences, goals, targets and timelines."

With this private member's bill, a door has been opened. I see a light at the end of the tunnel. I think it's a novel idea. We've seen a number of novel ideas come from this member, particularly with respect to environmental issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I too would like to support the member and the bill for a whole host of reasons, one especially around the issue of organic waste management. The time has come—and actually, it's been here for a while—where we can look at the use of that waste in a number of different ways.

For example, I believe it's in Arkansas that they actually have organic waste—and in this case, it's from turkeys and chickens—and they create electricity, and their by-product is actually an edible oil. That's physics and water.

Then there's another example in Sweden where they're doing the exact same thing with organic waste, and their by-product is fuel, and they run their buses on the fuel.

So the time has come for us to look at how we can use the waste differently and how we can incorporate it into a more sustainable use. Filling land with waste and then going back in 20 years to put a pipe in the ground and get out some methane is not my idea of how we should use this good earth; I think there are other ways to do it. I'm really particularly pleased that the member has brought forward a bill that gives us the opportunity to have this kind of debate where we can look at what these options really are, where they're feasible, where it can make a difference, how we can move forward and how we in fact can help municipalities deal with a very critical issue, and that is, what do we do with landfill waste as a whole? Not only can you look at the organic—although it's specific—you can look at the broader picture as well.

1430

I'd like to reiterate that I'm very supportive of the member's bill. I hope it goes through to committee, that we can have this discussion and actually have a broader discussion about the whole use of waste and how we can manage to use it in a far more productive way than just filling it into a landfill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Seeing none, the honourable member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I want to thank each and every member for their contribution. Earlier today during statements, I made my Christmas/New Year's wish that this Legislature could act in a more constructive way and utilize the backbench and their good offices and their intelligence, bringing together their talents to actually deal with issues that have been left in abeyance or neglected over a period of time. I think this is an excellent area where we could all focus our efforts and come up with some practical solutions to a problem that's been there far too long.

I want to thank the members for their kind remarks, particularly those of the member for Haldimand–Norfolk, my friend Mr. Barrett.

Perhaps my most significant and proudest moment in this Legislature came early in my career when I became responsible for the plan for the Niagara Escarpment. It was during that period of time when I really took a very deep interest in environmental issues. That plan, which I put forward in 1984–85, still stands very strong today. I was very proud of that and will always remember that as a great accomplishment, should I ever leave this place.

I hope that we will get an opportunity in committee to discuss this particular bill. I hope this will lead to, perhaps sometime in the not too far distant future, a select committee where we can discuss solid waste management, disposal and diversion in a larger context.

Thank you very much, all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for Mr. Sterling's ballot item has expired. We'll vote on it, if all goes well, in about 100 minutes.

LABOUR STABILITY IN THE INDUSTRIES OF FILM, TELEVISION, RADIO AND NEW MEDIA ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA STABILITÉ DE LA MAIN-D'OEUVRE DANS LES INDUSTRIES DU FILM, DE LA TÉLÉVISION, DE LA RADIO ET DES NOUVEAUX MÉDIAS

Mr. Tabuns moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 137, An Act to regulate labour relations in the industries of film, television, radio and new media / Projet de loi 137, Loi réglementant les relations de travail

dans les industries du film, de la télévision, de la radio et des nouveaux médias.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation. Mr. Tabuns.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I had an opportunity before the session this afternoon to talk to some of my colleagues, who said, "So why exactly do we need this kind of act? What is the problem that's being addressed?"

I want to start off and explain to my colleagues about an engraving that I saw a number of years ago on the wall of a lawyer's office. That lawyer, who had been in practice for a long time, collected these engravings from the 1800s. It was an engraving showing a lawyer sitting on a milking stool, with a cow in front of him, milking that cow. At one end of the cow was a farmer pulling on the horns; at the other end was a farmer pulling on the tail. The lawyer was doing very well from the conflict between the farmers over who actually was going to benefit from this particular cow.

The situation we face today in the media industries in Ontario is that there is a tug-of-war that allows lawyers to do well, but slows down the production of film, television and new media. No offence to lawyers, but that has to change.

We make films in this province. We make very good films, films that take people away from their troubles, like Red, X-Men, if you're of that persuasion, My Big Fat Greek Wedding. Those films were made here. They were made well. We've made films like Away From Her that cause people to look at the very centre of what makes them human. We make good television series like Flashpoint, The Red Green Show, Little Mosque on the Prairie or Corner Gas.

We make music. We provide Web content. We have performers and technicians who are the match of any around the world. We have directors, actors, writers, musicians, technicians, media workers and a support community that makes Ontario a major player in the film, television and new media worlds. We have the locations and we have the skills to make great films.

At the centre of all this are the people who make it happen. They are the skilled and creative resource that allows this industry to exist in this province. They are critical, and they need to be treated fairly.

I want to speak briefly about the critical nature of this industry. We often think of the cultural value of the work that artists and media workers do, but there is huge economic value as well. Last year, the industry generated \$900 million in the Toronto area alone. That industry is a key part of the much larger \$19-billion-per-year arts and culture sector in Ontario. Arts don't just make life enjoyable in Ontario, they're a major pillar of our economy.

And although arts workers aren't in it for the money—and unfortunately, that is all too often obvious—they do deserve some financial security. Workers in the arts, despite 43% having a university degree, earn an average of just \$26,800 a year, 26% below the workforce aver-

age. Most can't make ends meet on an arts income alone, despite spending an average of two thirds of their work time in the arts. This must change.

Currently in the film, television and new media industries, the collective agreements they have with producers are subject to challenge. When there's a dispute or a producer is unhappy with the way things have turned out, they try to look for loopholes to avoid honouring their agreements. Some producers have been known to say that their collective agreements aren't valid and that they don't have to be honoured. That is simply wrong. It is factually and ethically wrong. The people who are visiting us here today could tell you in great detail why that's wrong.

Whether you are right or not in legal matters is not always the most central thing, as you're well aware. Disagreements mean that lawyers are drawn in and employed when, in fact, the funds are needed far more for the pursuit of film and television. The current legal framework leads to uncertainty and it leads to legal wrangling, and that has to end.

This bill does that. It will end the wrangling over the recognition of the collective agreements in film, television and new media production. It will situate them unarguably within the Labour Relations Act. The loophole that has been used against artists in this province will be closed. It will mean more of the money spent on production goes into production, into the hands of the film and television community, and less into the courts. Producers, as much as artists and media workers, will benefit from the stability. Both need to know that when they negotiate an agreement, it will be respected. We can't waste this incredible community and its time on legal conflicts.

The bill is very simple. It allows the existing agreements in the film, television and new media industries to be recognized clearly within the Labour Relations Act. It gives the unions and the producers within the act the clear right to access dispute resolution mechanisms. It provides a method for giving recognition to producers' associations within the act. It enables master agreements to be recognized without ambiguity, as applying to all who are parties to the agreements and members of the representative organizations of unions and producers.

1440

Film, TV and new media are produced by a very diverse community. Because of their unique working relationships, the Labour Relations Act needs to be amended so that their reality is recognized and their interests are treated and treated fairly.

I want to read some quotes from people in the industry who know what has to be done, a number of whom are here today.

"This legislation, if passed, will send a message of stability and assist us in pursuing work opportunities for all artists and other cultural workers in Ontario. The proposed legislation codifies the practices we've used for many years. There is no reason that it cannot get full support from MPPs from all parties, and I look forward

to it becoming the law," said Ron Haney, CEO and executive director of the Directors Guild of Canada here in Ontario. Mr. Haney is here.

Another quote: "We are established unions with established collective bargaining practices. Most of the time everything works fine, but persistent ambiguity about the legal status of the Ontario film and television industry makes it unnecessarily complicated, time-consuming and expensive to sort things out when disagreements arise. The result is money that should be spent on filmmaking is wasted on legal manoeuvres. The bill would bring an end to that and allow us to get on with what we do best—grow the Ontario film and television industry." So says Heather Allin, president of ACTRA Toronto. She is here today.

Another quote: "An industry of that size and importance needs whatever stability we can give it, and the workers deserve to know their contracts are 100% safe," says Jonathan Ahee, president of NABET 700 CEP, represented today by business agent David Hardy.

Another quote: "I urge all MPPs to support this bill for the good of the film, television and new media industry," said Jim Biros, the executive director of the Toronto Musicians' Association, represented today by Daniel Broome.

No disrespect to lawyers and anyone who is interested in going to law school, but what we need is a legal regime in Ontario that doesn't mean that this unnecessary legal work is another burden on our film and media community. Let's let the film and TV community do what they do best: make film and television, make new media and grow the whole industry.

This Legislature can do that. Those of you in the chamber today can vote to take a step forward for fairness and stability in the film and television industry. You can pass this bill and make life simpler, less about the courtroom, more about the sound stage, less about legal wrangling and more about our lives, our hopes and our dreams played out on the screen.

In another time, Charles Dickens wrote a famous novel, Bleak House. That novel opens in a courtroom in London. The room is filled with lawyers. The proceedings grind on slowly and interminably. The novel ends with the matter of the inheritance, the whole centre of the lawsuit finally settled but no inheritance left because it has been eaten up by legal fees.

Let's make the movie about Bleak House. Let's not live the experience.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted to stand up in my place and speak about this important subject. I want to welcome all the artists who are with us here in the gallery and in the members' gallery.

I agree with the member from Toronto—Danforth: Artists are our ambassadors. They introduce culture. They introduce traditions. They promote the beautiful nature we have in the province of Ontario. They talk about our stability, our economy, our diversity and our

multiculturalism. They talk about many different things, and they package it in a format, whether it goes on film, the radio or in a series which I enjoy on a regular basis. I'm a great fan of all the artists. Despite the work I have, on a regular basis I like to watch TV, and I watch a lot of shows. In my past life, when I was in Lebanon, I was an actor. I did act in the theatre—

Interjection.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Some people think I still am an actor. I enjoy the arts.

The artists in the province of Ontario produce a lot. There are a lot of them here. There are almost 57,000 across the province of Ontario. They promote our wonderful province to the whole world, to the whole planet.

I heard the member from Toronto—Danforth talk about the complexity of the issue, about the artists who give their lives, their talent and their skills to us to enjoy, and also to the province to be promoted, and that getting back a return, especially when they get in a difficult situation—they have to fight with lawyers. I'm not a lawyer, but some lawyers are good and they help us to protect our rights and to see the legal path of many different issues. I think they require our financial support, our legal support, our legislative support, in order to make their lives easier to be free to do the job they know well and to continue to help us to promote our province.

I read the bill many, many different times since yesterday. I'm not sure if your issue will be addressed in this bill, because the member from Toronto—Danforth is talking about asking the Ministry of Labour to organize that relationship. As I mentioned, I'm not a lawyer, so I don't understand the legal technicalities of this issue, but the job of the Ministry of Labour is not to force a bargained agreement between the employees or the contractors but to facilitate that relationship, make it workable and make it fit both sides. I know the intention of the member from Toronto—Danforth is incredible, and I support his intention, but I'm not sure if we should force the Minister of Labour to do something he is not equipped legally and technically to do in the province of Ontario. As I said, we facilitate the negotiations between the two parties. We don't force them to sign an agreement they don't accept or agree to.

To the artist community, you've got my full support.

To the member from Danforth, I want to thank you for bringing this forward to be debated here, but I'm not sure that format will work for you. I want it to work. I want to have a format to protect the artists in the province of Ontario. I want a format to give the artists the full financial and legal support to be able to continue to produce for us and to enjoy their work on a regular basis. I struggle to see what you are trying to establish, besides your wanting to protect the artist community. I know you want to provide a good mechanism for them to be able to work without worries about their income. Is it going to be cut or not? Will they get the money they deserve or not? As you mentioned, there are a lot of tricks out there. If they're not careful, the contractor who hires them to do certain jobs has a lot of fine print on the bottom, trying to

weasel his or her way out, to not pay his or her duties to the people who do the job. So I'm with you. We have to discuss this issue, we have to debate it, but we have to find the right format in order to protect the artists in the province of Ontario.

So I support the intent of the bill, but I'm not sure that format will help the artists. I'm not sure we technically and legally are able to force the Minister of Labour to force both sides to have some kind of an agreement, because I don't think it's his or her role to do so.

To the artist community, to the member from Danforth, I support the intent, but we have to find a different format to help you for the present and for the future. It's important for you to stay alive, to be able to continue to produce for us and for the whole planet, because you are our cultural ambassadors. You're ambassadors to promote the province of Ontario, to promote our abilities. I know you promote Toronto very well and Ontario very well because there are a lot of films produced in Toronto; I was very impressed. I also enjoy your talent and your skills. Let's go think together to find the right format to help you out and to protect your future.

1450

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure and also a surprise, I might say, that I have this opportunity to speak on this this afternoon. I have to say that I am not the labour critic but I've taken the liberty of reading Bill 137.

I know and respect the member from Toronto-Danforth, and I say that openly here as I do almost every time I speak; a very knowledgeable, committed and true-spirit person.

In my reading here, I know there are seven parts to the bill—it's quite structured—and 23 different sections of the bill. I also want to take a moment here and recognize, although I'm not a great—the only thing I watch is news channels; it's how you kind of keep up on this job. But I do want to recognize the people here in the audience from ACTRA, of course, as well as the Canadian Federation of Musicians—I think it was Daniel; CEP Local 700M—David, I guess; and the Directors Guild of Canada-Ontario. Welcome, and you'll see the Legislature functioning today or, as you might say, dysfunctional. There's not too many people here today. It's the last day of the Legislature, and as such it's more or less—this place itself is kind of like a theatre. Really, in a way, it's often a lot of acting that takes place, a lot of pretence.

They're the government side. And as I was listening here on this side, the member from London-Fanshawe, who just spoke and left—he's over here now speaking to Howard, one of the lobbyists—said he supports the intent of the bill. That's code language for they're not voting for it.

I would say on our side, being quite forthright, that we have looked at it to the extent that in my working career at General Motors I did spend some time in my 31 years there working in labour relations and personnel. I see the importance of being properly represented. I think it's

very important and, in all due respect, having worked with Buzz Hargrove and a few of the others during that time, I see how it's important to have one voice to communicate with, a reliable message from the membership that says, "These are the three principles that we support at the bargaining table, and here's one that we don't support." What you're looking for is consistent, stable messaging at the negotiations with the producers or the other groups, I suppose, and not allowing the sidebar negotiations with the legal community. I probably would be on-side in a general sense with this being less about the courtroom and more about the soundstage. I support that.

I think the people actually affected, their lives as actors and artists—it's very important. It's a fragile existence anyway. It's a "You're only as good as your last song" sort of thing. You can be in mid-stage of your career and be identified as too right-wing and then be isolated; you'd never work again. As we saw play out this week as some of the actors around Chief Fantino and Rob Ford, if you're identified as on the right side. Generally, the arts and creative community are sort of against the grain. They're creative in their own light; think of free spirit and that. That's where this doesn't fit exactly.

I do recognize the importance of having the single voice, the entry point legitimacy of being certified or being recognized as the voice.

Now, when you look down here at the preamble, the explanatory notes are very important to read. I think the most important part here is that it says—and there's a section here, I think it's section 18, that defines all that stuff. It's the final section of the bill; let me look it up here. The final section of the bill is part VI, the regulation section, and it defines all of those things. I think that's pretty broad. It's something they'd have to work on with the industry itself: to define what is an artist, new media, an animator, all these things that are emerging in your media world. That's very important. That's the work that needs to be done. I think part of it is educating us the legislators, if you will; but more importantly, the civil servants that actually write this stuff, because members on neither side—whoever's government—write it. Actually, it's written by the lawyers, often for the Attorney General. Those counsel are the ones that you'd need to work with. I support that. I support clarification of that, and it could happen today under the existing terms.

You were asking for—and I do recognize that the government itself does support directly, and often indirectly, the media, whether it's Luminato or whatever else, but it's related to the larger picture of tourism. It's such an important part of the Ontario economy. It was said, I think by Mr. Tabuns, that it's about \$19 billion, the Ontario arts and culture community. I respect that. I for one, traditionally, have always taken my children when they were young, and now our grandchildren, to see some of the Christmas—the Nutcracker and things like that. But I do think it enriches our lives, and there's no question that we need that community to be respected and

supported. Without it, our lives would not be as rich as they are.

I say that codifying the practices that exist today—in fact, what you want is to legitimize the process in regulation and in law, and that's codifying the practices that exist, as I heard it being said, and there are established representatives. That's one of the problems. One of the concerns that I raise on behalf of our side would be that there are four existing unions that are specifically named in the legislation, and that might be a bit presumptive, because on the overall organized worker side of business today there's probably less and less. We see what's happening. You get into shareholder issues and return on equity and all these kinds of things. It's no different from your business. To get production, you've got to minimize cost.

It's kind of a risky environment, too. Battle of the Blades is a good example. That thing could be a complete flop, but it's already packaged before it's sold. It's sold as a concept, I guess. What's the big one now? It's Spider-Man; it's a theatrical production. It has had huge problems in the States about getting commercialized. Conceptually, the artists and producers and the technical people behind it, from my understanding, said, "To heck with the costs. It's about art, and art can't compromise on costs." Well, that's a whole discussion, too. How do you get it to the market and let people share and enjoy it?

But the four sections which I've mentioned, which are referred to, which are actually deemed in the section, are under part IV, designated bargaining agents and media:

"The following media industry workers' associations are designated bargaining agents for the members of the association who are media industry workers, unless the designation is revoked under section 17...."

So it's a bit technical, and I'm failing to say that, perhaps on our side, we'll have to hear the rest of the debate to be clear on whether or not—I'm looking to see if anyone wants to spread a few words on this one. My own personal view would probably be quite supportive of moving it to the level of having hearings. Where you are, second reading, allows a bill—and it's up to the government. At the end of the day, they run the place, so if something's working, whether the HST is good or bad, they're responsible. We're here to point out things we disagree with, and they often criticize us for it.

But the real issue here comes down to what you say: codifying existing practices and legitimizing the four agents that work in your representation.

More important, I say, is part V, designated bargaining agents and producers. There's an important part to recognize. It says here:

"A producers' association may"—that's a tricky word: "may;" a stronger word is "shall"—"if authorized by a majority of its members, apply to the minister, in the prescribed form, to become the designated bargaining agent for members of the association."

That's certification, and you see what's happening now in the city of Toronto and the changes that may occur there. You have to be a certified union to provide

any services in the city of Toronto. That causes you to become less competitive, if that's important. Then you say, "Well, my house taxes are too expensive." Why? Because you're not reaping the efficiencies of new ways of doing things. It sounds almost negative to say, "Let's be efficient," when it means somebody may lose their job. Do you understand? That's why this is the balance in the economy of—all the jobs are moving to China. Why? We've priced ourselves out of the business of building cars. It's that simple.

Interjection.

1500

Mr. John O'Toole: There's Bob over there; he's a member of the government. Wait till he stands up and see how he votes. That's a good point right there.

But my point is, we are entitled to have differences of opinions. The real thing here is I support, quite frankly, the importance of being treated fairly and having a single voice to dialogue with when there are negotiations, rather than having seven qualified and three unqualified people at the table, saying, "This is what we can do," and somebody else saying, "We can do something else differently."

At the same time, you said to make sure that we keep the production values, however crass that may sound, right here in Toronto. I think we should all be quite proud and, if you will, supportive of the production environment right here in the city of Toronto and beyond, because it's a great industry. I know people personally who work in it in the production side, mostly technical-type people, and I think those jobs are important. To hear the great artists that may be in some of the productions, whether—Corner Gas, I think, is a neat program to watch.

So it's good, and I think the question then remains: Are we going to move it to the next stage? Second reading would allow it to go to committee, if this passed today. If it went to committee, you would be able to make a delegation and a presentation to validate your argument and to educate the public about what you're actually talking about.

The real issue is, there's an election coming up. This may not go anywhere. Unfortunately, the timing of this—Mr. Tabuns knows that—is such that it will never see the light of day, unfortunately, even if it passes. That's the reality.

You should continue to try and inform us and educate us and bring the importance of how important art and culture are to our quality of life that we all share in the great province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'll be speaking and leaving some time for my colleague from Parkdale—High Park. I want to address some of the questions that have been raised, to give some comfort to those who raised those questions.

The member from London—Fanshawe: You're entirely correct. The people you see before you are the face of Canada to the world, onscreen, day after day, month after month, for years. This is who we are seen to be. The

work that they do is critical, is not easily reproduced; it's creative. They themselves are the material that is at the centre of the industry.

You raised this question: Could the Minister of Labour actually be equipped to move this forward? I say to you, Member, that the Minister of Labour has been presented with a document, this bill, that has been worked out after extensive consultation with those who work in this sector.

For those of you who haven't dealt with the sector before—and I have to say, legislative counsel, who were given the specifications, the background, were completely confused initially. "How does this work? How does this go from this to something onscreen? Who are the honey wagon operators?" were the questions I was posed.

Member, what we tried to do was look at the experience in other jurisdictions; look at the experience in the construction sector, which is also quite complex; and try to pull together a bill that actually would provide a framework that would codify what exists today so that we would not in the future be in a situation where producers who didn't want to honour their contracts had a loophole to skip through. That's what it does.

Member from Durham, you were concerned that people might be forced to sign on, compelled to bargain. But in fact, what this bill does is allow the creators, in their unions and their guilds, to come together, bargain scale and sign a contract with producers. What it allows producers to do is come together and sign on, or not sign on, to this agreement. That was a question that was raised by a number of people. Legislatively, politically, it would not make sense to compel the producers to come to the table. That's another process. But when the producers recognize that their interests coincide with the interests of the creators, they will then have a legal framework within which to operate.

We looked at what happened in British Columbia and the way their labour relations act regarding film and television was structured. It was a structure that did not work in some important aspects, particularly the way it divided up the industry between the Canadian and the service sections. That is not there. What is here is a recognition that those associations or unions that have signed on represent their members. It's as simple as that, at one end, and any other union that wanted to sign on to say it represents its members can sign on. Producers who want to represent their members can sign on.

I want to say to the member from Durham and the member from London—Fanshawe, I understand your concerns. Many of those were raised initially at the discussions that were held with ACTRA; the directors guild; local 700 CEP, also known as NABET; and the Canadian Federation of Musicians. How do we structure it so that our complex labour relations are reflected and we take the situation that exists today, codify it and put it into law? That's what we have here.

I say to all of you: You have neighbours who you will be seeing onscreen, who you may not be aware are actors. You will see the results of your neighbours who

are electricians, set builders, prop masters. You will see the results of their labour on the television screens that you look at at night or the film screens that you look at when you go to a theatre. Those people who participate in this industry—who are critical to its existence in this jurisdiction, because without their skill, this could not exist—need to be paid fairly. No argument in this room. They need to know that their agreements will be honoured and not sidetracked into some legal abyss where everyone spends far more on lawyers—no offence to lawyers—than is necessary. That's what's on the table.

I say to all of you: You have an opportunity to move forward, in this province, a framework that has not previously been thought out or hammered out, and one that in fact would serve our interests here in Ontario, serve our interests economically and culturally, and serve our interests in terms of the ethics of treating people fairly and making sure that a deal is a deal. Who can argue with that? Maybe some of you; I will find out soon.

I'm going to cede the floor. My colleague from Parkdale—High Park will speak in her rotation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: First of all, merry Christmas to you, Speaker. You weren't in the chair when I gave my message before. All the best to you and, obviously, for our guests and friends who are here. It's our last opportunity, so merry Christmas. I didn't get to see you too, Rosie; merry Christmas.

I'm going to tackle this first piece a little delicately, because I recall as a kid—and I don't want to bring back bad memories—when film actors and actresses performed and musicians performed, there was black and white. Do you remember the guy with the black hat and the guy with the white hat? Do you remember the guy with the long, weedy moustache and the black hat and cape? You could also tell between the good and the bad.

We heard today everyone acknowledging that this is a complex issue. I don't think anyone is saying that this is not a complex issue. The issue for me—and I've spoken to some of the friends in the gallery, talking about the status of the artist—is to ensure that we elevate the people who we take pride in saying such good things about; it's an important aspect of this debate.

I've got four pages of research that I did on the economic impact and the value of what the arts bring to our communities, to the province and to the country, indeed—and quite frankly, internationally.

It's very typical of us as Canadians—we tend to eat our young, or for some strange reason, not hold them in high esteem. We've changed that; we've turned that corner. So I want to make sure that I duplicate what all of the members in this House have talked about: our immense pride in those talented people, particularly those who use their own skill sets to give us entertainment, to tell us stories and most importantly, to bring to us a sense of who we are.

1510

I've been an educator for 25 years and deplored the condition we ended up turning ourselves into in educa-

tion when we removed art and music and the types of things that we need to encourage.

I used a lot of time to say that, because I wanted to position this in terms of what I was going to ask the member to continue to clarify, because there are still a couple of clarity pieces I need from him. Is there an expectation that in committee we are going to look at what those regulatory streams are going to be? The bill itself is rather vague on the nuances of what's going to happen during these negotiations and who would be responsible for what. The second component to that is the one I have a lot of problem with. For the first time, you're asking the Minister of Labour to do something that the labour relations board would do, and that is, if I'm reading the bill right, the minister will be required to play an active role in the designation of bargaining agents as well as the revocation of such designations. That has not been done, typically and traditionally, by the Ministry of Labour. I don't think it has ever been done. I think that's been done by the labour relations board, so I think you need to bring some clarity under that part. I could not support the bill in its present status, just on that point alone. That's a very difficult position to put the Minister of Labour in. It's a sacrosanct thing for the minister not to be involved in the labour relations board and the Labour Relations Act. You're injecting the Minister of Labour into a position, according to what you've said in your bill, that he has never been in before. I find that unique and different, and I hesitate to support that.

One of the things that I would also ask to deal with is general in scope. I have my own personal bugaboo about how live musicians and bands are treated in bars. If you want to talk about real meat and potatoes, talk about how they're treated. I know the AFM is participating in that discussion. Is there an impact in your bill on the type of artistry that is performed by that group of people, who need protection from or improvements to—I have said this openly. Status of the artist: We need to continue to flow and get better at doing that.

The premise that I come to you today with, member from Toronto—Danforth, is to find out whether or not the bill's drafting has been prepared to deal with, in that particular area, the Ministry of Labour; the status of the artist; what connectivity there is with this legislation to ensure that all performing artists are treated in the same way; and our capacity to elevate this to a debate about proving that our artists are seen as an important aspect of the labour negotiation piece, which also makes a distinction between those.

I think you have a list of all of the different stakeholders that are involved in this. I'm sure you do not suggest for one minute that all the stakeholders are on-side, number one, and, number two, that even the people in their own organizations are onside with negotiating generally instead of on a single-contract basis.

So I need to know some of that clarity. That would be very helpful for me before I decide to vote in my private members' time that's been designated to me here by the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm standing in support, of course, of this legislation.

It's with some degree of bewilderment that I hear the comments from across the floor. I guess what really irks me is the sense of patronization that undergirds the comments, as if actors and as if the assembled here haven't thought about the ins and outs of this bill, haven't studied it. This is the Liberal government, the McGuinty government, telling cultural workers that they know what's good for them better than they do. That's exactly what I'm hearing from across the floor. It's not the first time we've heard it. It's unbelievable.

The member from Brant has the gall to talk about status of the artist. I, in particular, brought in a status-of-the-artist bill years ago to do some basic things in this province; for example, income averaging, providing housing, protection for child performers. That's called status-of-the-artist legislation. We don't have any in this province. We don't have any. The government responded, after a good deal of pressure, with a "we love artists" day—I think it's in June—and called it status-of-the-artist legislation.

We do not have any status-of-the-artist legislation in this province; we don't even have protection for child performers. That is status quo under the McGuinty Liberals. Now we hear that the McGuinty Liberals know better what is good for artists and cultural workers than they know themselves. I can't imagine anything more patronizing than that.

The simple reality is that cultural workers are workers and labour relations cover workers. This is recognized in jurisdictions around the world. You don't have to look far in Europe, for example, to see jurisdictions that treat cultural workers a thousand per cent better than we do. You don't have to look far.

It's not a lot that's being asked for here; it's not over-archingly ambitious. It's not asking, for example, for guaranteed annual incomes or housing for artists, which I think should be part of the picture for artists. It's not asking for protection, as I said. It's not actually asking for an extension of the ability to unionize, i.e., card-check certification or anti-scab legislation. It's not asking for any of that, which I think should also be part of this and is part of it, by the way, in many other jurisdictions. No, we're just asking for a very simple change. As was said by the member from Durham, unfortunately even this very simple change is attacked by the members of the government. My goodness, it's quite ideologically astounding to me, because they know that even if they vote for it, they're going to kill it at committee, and they're not even going to vote for it?

What we're witnessing here is an astounding lack of understanding of the reality of cultural workers in Ontario. Despite all the rhetoric—and it is rhetoric—to the contrary, what we're talking about is an incredible lack of understanding of the importance of the arts. That's what we're witnessing here, an incredible lack of

understanding, a sad lack of understanding on behalf of elected representatives.

Honestly, I think that if there was some justice, the comments that have been made here about this simple change in legislation should be broadcast to artists, musicians and cultural workers of all sorts right across the province. That's what should happen. Because really, people should know who is representing them and how illiberal the Liberals are when it comes to the arts in this province.

It's a very simple change that my colleague is asking for, a well-researched, well-thought-out simple change called for by organized cultural workers from all sectors. This was researched and carefully thought out; this was not done on the back of an envelope. This is something cultural workers have asked for, for themselves, and what they hear from the government is that the government knows better than they do.

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Are you supporting it?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Why don't you wait for the vote?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Go on, then. Prove me wrong.

Interjections.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I hope you do. And if what they're saying is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I'd just remind the honourable member to speak through the Chair, please.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Mr. Speaker, if they're correct, and if they are in fact going to support it—we'll be here and we'll be counting—then I hope, even more than the patronizing rhetoric from them that we've been privy to, that they actually support it in terms of moving it to committee, and even more so, I hope they actually bring it in as law. Because we know that with their overwhelming majority they have to act or it doesn't happen.

Just to summarize, I would be absolutely astounded and delighted if everybody voted for this—of course, I'm going to. But even if you vote for it, let's get it through committee and bring it back as law. If you don't vote for it—if you don't—shame on each and every one of you.

Merry Christmas, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The honourable member for Toronto—Danforth has two minutes for his response.

1520

Mr. Peter Tabuns: For the last afternoon of the session, people are very lively.

The member from Brant raised a number of questions, and I want to address them just so that they will not sit on the table. There are a number of things that are going to have to be sorted out in regulation. That's the way the bill was written. I have to say to all of you here that there were many helpful legal thinkers who would have written a 200-page bill—peace be upon them—but we decided that rolling the bill in on wheels wouldn't really be helpful this afternoon.

The whole question of the minister being involved in designation: The structure was written by legislative

counsel. It's my understanding that that's the way the legislation is written so that the minister can say to the labour relations board, "Please do an assessment. Look at what has been applied for and then, in turn, give me your recommendation."

So I think the things that are of concern to the members who have spoken to this bill—and I appreciate the fact that they took the time to look at it, think through what mattered to them and were willing to address it here in the Legislature. That is a positive.

By voting in favour of this, you can give the arts community in this province a vote of confidence and say, "What you do, we support. We know how important you are. We know how critical fairness is. We, as a Legislature, want a strong, vibrant, growing arts and culture sector. We want a film, television and new media community that will continue"—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: And art, sorry—"a musical community that will continue to go around the world, speaking out, showing what Ontario and Canada have."

Thanks to all of those who I hope will vote in favour of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for this ballot item has expired. We'll vote on it in about 50 minutes.

MUNICIPAL RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL SURGE PROTECTOR ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'INSTALLATION DE PARASURTENSEURS RÉSIDENTIELS ET COMMERCIAUX DANS LES MUNICIPALITÉS

Mr. Lalonde moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 134, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992, the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Municipal Act, 2001 with respect to surge protectors in new residential and commercial buildings / Projet de loi 134, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment, la Loi de 2006 sur la cité de Toronto et la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités à l'égard de l'installation de parasurtenseurs dans les nouveaux immeubles d'habitation et les nouveaux immeubles commerciaux.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for his presentation. Mr. Lalonde?

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: C'est avec plaisir que je présente en deuxième lecture le projet de loi 134, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment, la Loi de 2006 sur la cité de Toronto et la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités à l'égard de l'installation de parasurtenseurs dans les nouveaux immeubles d'habitation et les nouveaux immeubles commerciaux.

Tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes bénéficieront de ce projet de loi qui prévoit la nécessité de recours légaux,

ainsi que les pertes économiques encourues lors du rétablissement de pannes de courant.

Bill 134, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992, the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Municipal Act, 2001 with respect to surge protectors in new residential and commercial buildings: These amendments would authorize municipalities to pass bylaws requiring the installation of surge protectors in new residential and commercial buildings. I want to make it clear that this bill does not force anything on municipalities.

As a long-time politician, I have learned that, after 40 years in politics, a good politician must always pay attention to the needs and concerns of his constituents. Well, this is exactly what I'm doing today. I have listened.

On March 17, 2009, I attended a public meeting on power outages organized by my colleague the member for Ottawa–Orléans, Phil McNeely. Many Hydro One customers from Orléans, Cumberland and Navan attended the meeting. Also in attendance were two representatives from Hydro One, Laura Cooke and Len McMillan, director of power lines operations.

Between 2008 and May 2009, over 40,000 Cumberland township residents experienced severe power outages. In many cases, these outages caused extensive damage and expenses. For example, after an outage on December 23, 2008, two days before Christmas, 86 claims were submitted to Hydro. They were for furnace repairs, electrical appliance damage, faulty electric garage doors, burned-out TVs and many others. Today, as far as I know, none of the 86 claims have been awarded; that is to say that no money was awarded either through Hydro One or the insurance companies.

Richard Lalonde, who is not my brother, but a resident of Queenswood Heights, a constituent of the Ottawa–Orléans riding, spent over \$800 on furnace repairs after the December 2008 outage. At the March 17, 2009 meeting, Richard Lalonde said, “You guys”—MPPs Lalonde and McNeely—“need to go back to the Ontario Legislature and act on our behalf.” This is exactly what I am doing today.

When I spoke with an insurance company, they explained their policy to me. If they deem the claim justifiable, they will only cover some specific appliances, but the deductible will apply, and at times the deductible goes as high as \$1,000, often higher than the price of repairing the damages.

Hydro One is the largest electricity distributor in the province of Ontario, serving over 1.2 million customers. The special advisor of corporate relations at Hydro One reports that they receive over 1,500 claims a year from customers seeking compensation for damages. About 80% of these are as a result of claimed power outages and surges. It is important to note that damages to electrical and heating equipment resulting from changes in voltage are not covered by hydro utilities.

Hydro One’s “Conditions of Service” document describes their limitations on the guarantee of supply: “Hydro One will endeavour to use reasonable diligence in providing a regular and uninterrupted supply of

electricity but does not guarantee a constant supply or the maintenance of unvaried voltage and will not be liable for damages to the customer by reason of any failure in respect thereof.”

A power surge occurs when an electrical charge is increased to up to 1,000 volts at some point in the distribution lines and hits a component designed for 120 and 240 volts, the regular voltage in residential homes. A less common but more damaging cause of power surge is lightning. When lightning strikes near a power line, the electrical energy can boost electrical pressure by millions of volts, causing an extremely large power surge. This can damage delicate parts found in all electronic devices, including home appliances, computers, televisions, furnaces and garage door openers, just to name a few.

A power surge can enter your home through power lines, telephone lines and cable lines. Power surges can also be caused by faulty wiring, broken power lines, faulty utility company equipment and extremely cold weather.

1530

What are surge protectors? Surge protectors block the peaks by diverting excess voltage to a home’s electrical ground connection. Surge protectors absorb the excess electrical energy, slowly letting it dissipate until it is grounded. These devices protect electrical equipment from voltage spikes. They can be installed directly on the electrical panel. The size of the device is roughly 24 by 10 by eight centimetres—very small. The cost could vary between \$100 and \$500, depending on the device you choose. Surge protectors have different points of installation, either the circuit breaker box or at the electricity meter.

I’ve received support from all over Canada. To the best of my knowledge, no other jurisdiction has proposed a bill like this. This problem is not exclusive to Ontario. In BC and in Manitoba, everybody’s complaining but nobody has ever paid attention to this problem. Manitoba Hydro is recommending that customers have their own surge protection devices installed for the protection of their personal electrical equipment.

In Florida, Florida hydro just recently—I got the call last week—has introduced a program where customers can rent surge protectors for a very low monthly fee to protect their homes’ electrical appliances and other electronic equipment.

I have received support for this bill from a number of constituents, local municipal hydro commissions and local distribution companies.

Selon l’administrateur en chef de la commission d’hydro de Hawkesbury, Michel Poulin, ce projet de loi semble simple et précis. Le parasurtenseur va effectivement protéger les appareils électriques du client et « par le fait même, éviter des réclamations ».

Hydro One has said, “It is safe to assume that surge protection in every newly constructed dwelling or commercial building ... could help to prevent damage to household appliances and other electrical equipment, usually beyond the control of Hydro One or the local distribution company.”

Selon René Beaulne, directeur général d'Hydro 2000 d'Alfred, « Ceci serait bon pour les usagers et protégerait leurs appareils électroniques. » Monsieur Beaulne, just today : « Notre région est affectée énormément par la fluctuation d'hydro. Je reviens d'une réunion du comité conjoint d'aqueduc avec le canton d'Alfred-Plantagenet et La Nation. La discussion principale a été la fluctuation d'hydro au plant d'usine d'eau de Leflaive. Il y a eu plusieurs bris d'équipement électronique. On parle d'une dépense entre 140 000 \$ et 200 000 \$ pour des régulateurs » et des parasurtenseurs.

Given the extent of the problem, many local distribution companies advise customers that they should invest in surge protectors. As I said, a surge protector only costs between \$100 and \$500. Power surges, as you can see in the case of Mr. Lalonde, can cost \$800 just to have a furnace repaired.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to this issue. I thank other members of this Legislature in advance for their feedback on this bill, and I look forward to commenting further in my closing statement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm always pleased to rise, especially when no one else is rising to speak, and it's important to always have some information on the bill that's being debated.

I want to start by expressing support for Mr. Lalonde from Prescott-Russell, who is one of the best hockey coaches in all of Ontario. I think he's won the Memorial Cup as a coach or manager or a team owner, so I commend him in that respect. But there is a case where we may have to separate from there on. I think we'll remain friends. I may want to play hockey next Tuesday at the Moss arena for you, if I'm still invited.

I would say that I'm not a particularly complete neophyte when it comes to these things. Nor am I a Luddite, because I recognize clearly that in the time we're in, with—this may sound overly political, but it's quite an important comment. The current forms of generation of electricity and the distribution and transmission of energy are all undergoing a great deal of change today in Ontario. Traditional forms of power generation, whether it's from nuclear, which is the base-load, and more specifically from fossil-powered plants, are generally reliable in producing a stable supply of 60-cycle energy—high voltage. When it's generated it's at very high voltage levels. Those big transformers that we see in our subdivisions actually bring the voltage down to the proper—it could be 500 volts or 550 or whatever for businesses, and at the household level we generally use 240 volts or 120 volts.

What's happening now—and Mr. Lalonde is correct: Often we see in homes people with these \$4, cheap surge protectors, often produced in China, plugged into \$10,000 systems, sound systems or LED screens or whatever, to protect them from potential voltage spikes. So he's right to the extent that it is a growing and problematic situation.

There is a responsibility, whether it's on stray voltage or spiked voltage caused by lightning or other things affecting the grid. I think the grounding system in Ontario is another thing that's often subject to criticism; it is the part of the infrastructure of Ontario that's really being rehabilitated under Hydro One. They've spent, I think, quite a bit of money trying to upgrade the system in Ontario.

I am a little adverse to moving into it, although it isn't, as Mr. Lalonde said in his opening remarks—the very first thing he said: "This does not force anything on the municipalities." In fact, I'm just going read the explanatory note. "The bill amends the Building Code Act, 1992, the City of Toronto Act, 2006, and the Municipal Act, 2001"—here's the point—"to authorize municipalities to pass bylaws requiring the installation of surge protectors in new residential and commercial buildings. The chief building official shall refuse to issue a building permit if a proposed building does not comply with such a bylaw." So it does, in fact, empower, allow and permit lower-tier municipalities to randomly choose to have surge protectors required on homes.

It really doesn't fix the problem. I think we need to fix the problem right from the transmission and distribution side of the business, which might be a bigger problem. We often hear—and I know members in the House here would know of what I speak, specifically the member from Oxford—about stray voltage and its impact. As well, proper grounding of equipment is a very important part of it. Also the systems manager, the IESO itself, the Independent Electricity System Operator, has a responsibility to make sure that we don't have any of these random interruptions of service.

Recently I was at a reception with the Ontario Electrical League, and they had some suggestions on this as well. They could see that in an individual household, it could be a consumer's option to do this. What the province could do is to use this as part of their education of consumers on the whole electricity thing, because what I'm hearing—I'm switching it a bit here—is that the electrical file in Ontario today is in complete disarray, absolutely in complete disarray.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: You were doing so well.

1540

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, they'll have their chance to respond. I know, merry Christmas, happy new year. The truth is always hard.

Here's the issue—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Now, listen up. I've taken the time to listen.

All I'm saying is this: The new forms of energy are often referred to as renewable energy. It's a very pleasant sound—lovely. Let's take solar.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Let's stick to coal.

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Rinaldi is talking about supporting coal. They've never closed one coal plant, and they promised it in 2003. They've had almost eight years, and they haven't done a thing. Elizabeth Witmer closed

the coal plant. I was there. She announced it, and then it was closed.

Now, here's what the deal is, though. If you look at the new supply mix report, they're going to have solar, wind and biomass forms of generation ahead of natural gas in its supply to the grid. What about when it's not sunny, and what about when it's not windy? The experts—now listen up—will tell you that solar and wind are intermittent power sources. Now, follow me. They also have it in their FIT contracts, feed-in tariffs, which are 80 cents a kilowatt hour—we'll get around to the energy file for a moment. Here's the issue: In their contracts, if they're generating electrons, the ministry—Brad Duguid doesn't know much about this file, actually—they get priority in dispatching. This means there could be a gas plant or a hydro plant where they'll divert the water around the dam so that they can dispatch the solar or wind electrons, which means they're wasting water or, in the case of natural gas, they'll offset those electrons that are being generated from a gas plant or a nuclear plant to dispatch the power coming from the renewables.

That's what actually happens. You're paying twice. You're paying for the water because there is a charge for water—it's called a water charge—when it goes over a fall. There's a charge for water, a tax on water. Also on the gas: You still have the people there at the factory producing electrons. If there's wind available, they're still there, so you're paying twice.

They said in their report that energy is going to go up 46%. We want clean, reliable energy, but we would add one more word, affordable, because energy is a non-discretionary consumption. You have to have it. People on fixed incomes have to have it. They can't afford to pay \$1,000 a month.

This plan may be very, very logical and embraceable, but it's not affordable. If they want to stand and dispute that—so getting back to the bill here, we need clean energy, not dirty energy.

Many of these new forms are DC power. When you turn a turbine, it's AC power, generally, that you produce. Solar is direct energy. In fact, if you look, and I was recently in Israel, almost all of the homes—this is where they're not doing it right—

Mr. Bob Delaney: On a point of order Mr. Speaker: With the greatest respect, the member knows full well that under standing order 23(b)(i), his subject of the discussion is not even remotely related to the bill under consideration.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I disagree. He's certainly talking about electricity and generation of electricity and power surges, and that's what the bill is about.

The honourable member for Durham has the floor.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'll take that respectable comment from the Speaker because he's a former Minister of Energy. As such, I appreciate his interruption.

The real issue on this is that we need power that's clean. Mr. Lalonde's correction is almost an intervention

to say from now on we're going to need surge protectors. He's almost providing a mechanism to mandate them. How would that happen? If you change the building code, and you mandate that all new homes have an \$800 or a \$1,000 thing—and the Electrical Safety Authority is the one that has to do it. It's not in the bill, so the bill is not properly drafted. The Electrical Safety Authority would be the one to license this.

Here's the key—it's a good bill, so I'm not trying to be smart here—there's that drafting error, so it should go to committee if that's the way it's going to go. It looks like it probably will; it's a government-supported thing.

Here's what I would suggest, though: You should look at making sure that the system operator, the IESO, Independent Electricity Safety Operator, doesn't dispatch spikes in voltage. If you don't, you're going to mandate that every house is now going to go up \$1,000.

You have Bill 140, which is an affordable housing bill. Houses today are not affordable. If you drive up the cost all the time, then you're making housing less affordable.

The government has a responsibility, if it's admitting there's variability in voltage, to fix the problem. I support the idea. I think Premier McGuinty and his Minister of Energy should look at it.

Look, if there is a need to have surge protectors in the system, work with the Electricity Safety Authority, the organization that's charged to fix this. Let's not download it to the individual homeowner who's already struggling under the HST and all the other stuff that you've put on them, and they can hardly afford to live in their homes. That's what I am hearing from my riding. "We don't need more red tape and regulation that is choking the people of Ontario."

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Either you support it or you don't support it.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Northumberland–Quinte West is very respectable, a former mayor and all that, but he doesn't seem to get it. On this file, I want you to listen to some of the things I'm telling you. I'm trying to help the constituents of Ontario, not hurt them.

This bill goes partway, and I suppose that, because Mr. Lalonde is such a good hockey coach, I'll probably be favourably—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Certainly, kudos to the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. He is not only a legislator in this place, but he's actually a real gentleman. I have to say, even though I diverge from the contents of the bill for a minute, that I want to thank him for being in the Christmas spirit and for his attention to my husband, who had a heart attack when he was playing with the Legiskaters. It was the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell who really took the time to make sure he was okay. Much over his wife's objections, he's now back playing hockey with the Legiskaters. Thank you to

him for not being only a legislator and a Legiskater but also a gentleman.

I'm going to support this bill. It's a no-brainer. I think it's not the first time he has introduced it, sadly. I wish it was law already.

I have a couple of questions, and I hope that in his two-minute response at the end he does answer them. I understand from the explanatory note that he's authorizing "municipalities to pass bylaws requiring," so as the member from Durham said, it's not mandatory. I'm wondering about the wording, because what he seems to be appealing to is not the individual homeowners, as the member from Durham is speaking about, but the developers of new homes and buildings. I know now that developers can appeal municipal rulings to the OMB. I'm wondering if that's what he is getting at with that wording.

Personally, as members know, I have brought in a bill that amends the Planning Act for inclusionary zoning. Unfortunately, it didn't go anywhere. But, again, it tried to allow municipalities to have the power to do what they deem to be the right thing. In this case, it's surge protectors.

I also listened to the member from Durham and have, again, a query because my understanding is that it's only about a \$100 to \$200 expense if you install them when homes or units are new, so it is not a significant expense. He's right, however: It would be and is sometimes a significant expense to an owner of a home already built that doesn't have them.

My suggestion would be it is a worthwhile expense. If you can possibly get the money together, it's an important expense. I know that the member from Oxford has brought in a bill about carbon monoxide detectors. I'm one of those people who didn't know such a thing existed until it went off and worked for me. Thank goodness, because I may not be here telling the tale. Now that has been put in but not retroactively so.

Fire detectors, certainly, carbon monoxide protectors, surge protectors, these are all necessary. These should be the fundamental building blocks of a safe house. This is what we should be asking all of our developers to do when they build a new house. I certainly advise homeowners who already have homes that don't have them—some are mandated, but this is not—to really think about it.

The member from Toronto—Danforth mentioned a story just now about his relatives in England, where there was a lightning storm, an electrical storm, and the TV blew up. This could be extremely dangerous.

I know when I was in a rural ministry, I had lightning strikes there more often than surges, but lightning strikes in a couple of farm homes—not only did they lose all their electronic equipment, but the fires started. I guess the reason that I haven't had personal experience of this, like so many, is that most of our relatively new electronic appliances now have individual surge protectors, but what the member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell is getting at is that they're not good enough for a major surge. They'll protect minor surges but not major ones.

The member from Beaches—East York spoke about a situation on his street where everyone on the street—and this is in the city of Toronto, not in a rural area—lost all of their electronic equipment because of one powerful, major surge. Of course, most people have house insurance that's deductible, and it's not adequate to cover this. If it's \$1,000 deductible, sometimes you've lost \$1,000. What are you going to do? Raise your insurance rates? No. You're going to swallow the cost and get the new equipment, which is unfortunate.

This is a very practical, reasonable suggestion, it seems to me. It's not overly onerous. It's simply leaving some space so that municipalities can do the right thing, and I certainly think that this is something that the House should pass, and not only pass, but—it's sad, really. I suppose all decisions in this place come from the corner office, as they say, but it's sad—I know this is not the first time he has brought this in—that the corner office and the cabinet haven't acted on this. I certainly hope that they do.

It's always sad, I think particularly when back-benchers in the Liberal caucus bring forward private members' bills once, twice, sometimes three times, and seemingly their government doesn't listen to their own membership. That's sad. I understand the partisan nature of this place and why they immediately kibosh everything from this side, but their own members? That is quite sad and not necessary, it seems to me, because as the member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills said quite eloquently the other day, we all have something to offer and we've all been elected by constituents who send us here hoping that we will effect change. It's very difficult to effect change when only a handful of people really run the province and everybody else's opinions are just grist for a mill that really doesn't produce any legislation at the end of the day. That's sad.

It's a very simple, straightforward piece of legislation that makes a great deal of sense, isn't onerous, isn't mandatory—perhaps it should be. I would like to know if what he's aiming at here is that problem with the OMB, because quite frankly, I think there is a problem with the Ontario Municipal Board. I also brought in a motion to reform that, because what we find in my riding with the Ontario Municipal Board is that they often override the will of citizens and the will of municipalities and don't take into account residents' wishes and desires, and often seem to be biased, I have to say, in favour of developers in the city of Toronto. We have a huge planning department in the city of Toronto that's quite capable of doing its own work.

I brought in a motion to amend the OMB. I'm wondering if this is in fact a kind of oblique commentary on the OMB and its ability to interfere with what municipalities want and should be able to pass. If a developer can override a municipality and go straight to the OMB and get what they want, what's the point of municipal authority?

Certainly I'm going to support it. Again, kudos to the member for being such a gentleman as well as a

legislator, and I look forward to his answers to my questions and to further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I am pleased to stand and support the member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, who truly is a gentleman, a fine hockey player and extraordinary colleague.

While I'm here, I guess I'll just take a moment and say merry Christmas to everyone and a happy new year, and I hope that you spend some time with your families, enjoy some rest, read a book, put your feet up, maybe curl up with your cat or your dog around the fire and have some peaceful time, and at the same time, remember as you're doing all of this, there are some folks out there who could use a little helping hand once in a while. Keep that in mind, as we are thankful for all the good things we have.

Most people don't know what a surge protector does. So I thought I'd share with you that a power surge, or transient voltage, is an increase in voltage significantly above the designated level in a flow of electricity. For example, in a normal household, you would have a 120, so if it goes above that, then you've got what's called a power surge, or transient voltage.

To understand this problem, it's helpful to understand something about voltage as a whole. Voltage is a measure of difference in electric potential energy. Electric current travels from point to point because there is a greater electric potential energy on one end of the wire than there is on the other end.

I think a good example that my colleague raised was cold weather. If you'll recall, when there was the ice storm in eastern Ontario, they had a significant number of power surges.

A power surge is an increase that lasts three nanoseconds—billions of a second or more. That's something that can actually do significant damage, and when it lasts for only one or two nanoseconds, it's actually called a power burst. Think about that: a short period of time that could have such significant challenge on your electrical equipment or in your home.

I don't think there's probably anybody who has bought a computer recently who doesn't have a power bar. A power bar is a surge protector. You turn it off when you leave, so you're protecting your electrical equipment. Most homes have these, and they cost a few dollars.

What my colleague is suggesting that should be done is that in new construction, it should be—it's permissive, because municipalities aren't going to be mandated to do this—have the authority to pass a law that actually protects companies and homes from these power surges that occur.

A really good example of this would be if you had severe climate change. Just look at what we had, as I said, in the far east; but also the amount of rain we've had, the significant amounts of snow that we've had. We have older equipment, and when that equipment goes down, we have a power surge that occurs, and then it

impacts our homes. So it makes sense. It's a good piece of protection. My colleague from Parkdale—High Park said that it's one of those things that you just need the information about in order to put in your home to protect that equipment that's so expensive. Computers are not cheap. Televisions are not cheap. The cheapest thing in your home might be your toaster, but then you still have to replace it if it burns out—because that's exactly what happens in a power surge.

You have to look at, what is the best kind of protection? Again, I think my colleague identified that one of the things you can do is you can go from a small power bar right through to protection of the entire house. To be honest with you, it's like putting in a master switch. A master switch in a house, when it's being built, costs you \$100 regardless, pretty much, of the size of the house. Putting it in afterwards costs you a fortune because you have to do all your rewiring. So it makes sense in new buildings, not existing, that the municipalities have the opportunity to actually put in place a bylaw that says you should look at this, because it can significantly save you dollars, especially if you've got a company where you've got mechanical failure and a motor that burns out as a result of a power surge.

I'd like to commend my colleague. I think what he's done is he's taken an issue that is prevalent, unfortunately, in his area, and that is the power surges—and I will tell you, it is in mine as well. I constantly get phone calls from people who are concerned.

Years ago, you had to redo your DVD player for your movies. Now you don't have to do that; now it does it automatically. But the fact is, if you come home and everything is not working, that power surge has interrupted your life. So if there's a way that you can minimize that interruption, if there's a way that you can make a difference—and one of those is by having the permissible legislation that municipalities can pass that says, looking at new construction, you should look at things such as the power surge, in terms of protection, and it can protect the whole house all at once.

Today we are living in a world where our climate is unpredictable and we are living in a world where we are more and more dependent upon those electronic devices that we use. If you think about, for example, hospitals, fire stations or paramedics, we are all using electronic devices more and more. Actually, the protection of those devices for a few dollars can save a great deal of time, a great deal of effort and obviously a great deal of money. It makes significant sense, and I'm more than pleased to be able to support my colleague as he brings forth this good bill.

1600

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm not sure if people know that the average home is hit with about 20 internal power surges in the course of a typical day, as just a frame of reference for the bill we're discussing here. Now, these surges are distributed throughout your home, and can

significantly shorten—as some of the other speakers have pointed out, they could in fact fry some of your electronics and other equipment.

I've made a quick list of some of the things in typical homes today that have printed circuit boards in them that would be vulnerable to a power surge. They include, for example, your fridge, washer, dryer, stove, microwave, dishwasher, computer, television, television converter and even your hydro meter itself. In the old days, all these things, with the possible exception of your fridge, either didn't exist or had two states, on or off. If they were off, they weren't vulnerable; if they were on, then they were. But today, we have an awful lot of things in our homes that are always on.

Now, what is electricity? Electricity, if you remember from your science book, is a sine wave. It goes up and down. A power surge means that that wave goes way up. Where it would normally oscillate like this, a surge goes way, way up, and that's what a surge protector is intended to curb. It clips the amount of power that surges into an electrical appliance.

In the old days, what did you have plugged in? You had your radio and your television. In the days before computers and fax machines, that was about it. You had some lamps that were plugged in, but not that much that was prone to a power surge. Today, your homes are increasingly run on machinery and electronics that, to one degree or another, operate on a printed circuit board and, most importantly, are always plugged in.

So this bill really does have a fair amount of impact. As the average home continues to add electronic devices of all types, it becomes increasingly necessary for a home to be protected by a whole-house surge protector. A stray electrical charge can enter a home and damage or destroy expensive electronic equipment. In fact, in some cases, these surges can lead to a fire and destroy the entire home.

Individual surge protection devices may be, but must not necessarily be, mandated by this particular bill. It's permissive legislation. It allows a municipality to make up its mind.

What's the most common source of an electrical power surge? It's a lightning strike. A surge can start with a bolt of lightning that strikes a building or any area close to it, and that current then travels into a building through pipes or lines of many types. When it gets to a place where it can head to the ground, like a computer, a television or a telephone, then it grounds and it can potentially fry the unit or blow it up. In some cases, the unit can spontaneously catch fire. So, this is actually a fairly significant protective measure.

A more likely source of an electrical surge in a home is a stray electrical charge. That stray electrical charge can be due to a general power surge; for example, a tree falling onto an electrical power line or telephone line, or turning a major appliance on or off. For example, if you unplug your fridge, all of a sudden there may be a momentary power surge as your house, which was used to drawing a whole lot of current, drops by an amount of

current equal to what your refrigerator was drawing. The same is true if your dryer comes on or two or three appliances come on at the same time.

You can protect yourself from power surges by protecting the buildings and appliances around you. As some members have noted, you can often do that with a power bar. But what the member is proposing in this bill is a whole-house surge protector which, if you're building a new home from scratch, is a very easy choice to make. It's not expensive when you're building a new home; it's not even that expensive when you're doing a retrofit.

What the member has brought forth is really a bill that I think is the start of a very powerful idea, an idea whose time may have come. He may be a little ahead of his curve, but as some of the members have said, this is the start of a discussion. He's brought up something that's important.

I'm certainly going to support this, because one of the things about a power grid that's important to remember is that to a greater and greater degree, it's being distributed. It's no longer from a few large, central, base generating stations. Today in my own neighbourhood, for example, in something like the Lisgar GO station, we've got a brand new windmill there, and a good, strong gust of wind could very well generate a surge of power which could affect the neighbourhood around us.

I'd like to echo a comment made by the previous speakers and wish all of my constituents and everyone in Ontario a very merry Christmas and a happy and a prosperous new year. Speaker, I thank you very much for the time to debate this particular bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Seeing none, the honourable member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: First of all, I want to thank the members for Durham, Parkdale—High Park, Etobicoke Centre and Mississauga—Streetsville.

I'd just like to go back to the member for Durham, when he mentioned the importance; he recognized that surge protectors are very, very important. I was just thinking, if the GM power plant in Oshawa didn't have the proper equipment to control the voltage, you could be stuck with hours of layoffs in there, but I'm sure that due to the importance of the protection, they do have surge protectors in there.

When he referred to the spike time of the electricity, as I mentioned in my initial presentation, Hydro is saying that they're not responsible and they don't guarantee, really, the variation and also the unvaried voltage. We've checked with other provinces. At the present time, no one can guarantee that—no one. This is why I said in Florida, Florida Power has decided to rent the surge protectors.

The member for Parkdale—High Park referred to the OMB. Let me tell you that the builder could apply to the OMB when the municipality passes a bylaw requiring that surge protectors be part of the building permit. So any consumer or any resident could appeal to the OMB,

and the OMB will decide. But the member does recognize the importance of surge protectors.

Etobicoke Centre said the same thing, and she referred to the ice storm. We definitely know the problem that we went through in eastern Ontario cost millions and millions of dollars in faulty equipment after the ice storm.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

ORGANIC WASTE
DIVERSION ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE RÉACHEMINEMENT
DES DÉCHETS ORGANIQUES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will first deal with ballot item number 58, standing in the name of Mr. Sterling.

Mr. Sterling has moved second reading of Bill 146, An Act to ban organic waste from landfill sites.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Sterling?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Would you refer the bill to the general government committee?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Agreed that we send the bill to the general government committee?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Unless there's a problem—let it go to the public accounts committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Agreed. General government: so ordered.

LABOUR STABILITY
IN THE INDUSTRIES OF FILM,
TELEVISION, RADIO

AND NEW MEDIA ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA STABILITÉ
DE LA MAIN-D'OEUVRE

DANS LES INDUSTRIES DU FILM,
DE LA TÉLÉVISION, DE LA RADIO
ET DES NOUVEAUX MÉDIAS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 59, standing in the name of Mr. Tabuns.

Mr. Tabuns has moved second reading of Bill 137, An Act to regulate labour relations in the industries of film, television, radio and new media.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I ask that the bill be sent to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be sent to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills? So ordered.

MUNICIPAL RESIDENTIAL
AND COMMERCIAL SURGE
PROTECTOR ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'INSTALLATION
DE PARASURTENSEURS RÉSIDENTIELS
ET COMMERCIAUX
DANS LES MUNICIPALITÉS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 60, standing in the name of Mr. Lalonde.

Mr. Lalonde has moved second reading of Bill 134, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992, the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Municipal Act, 2001 with respect to surge protectors in new residential and commercial buildings.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I would ask that this bill be sent to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Agreed? So ordered.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now call orders of the day.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until February 22, 2011. Merry Christmas and happy holidays to all of you, and thank you to our pages.

The House adjourned at 1611.

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Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
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Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
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Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex Niagara West-Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest-Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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